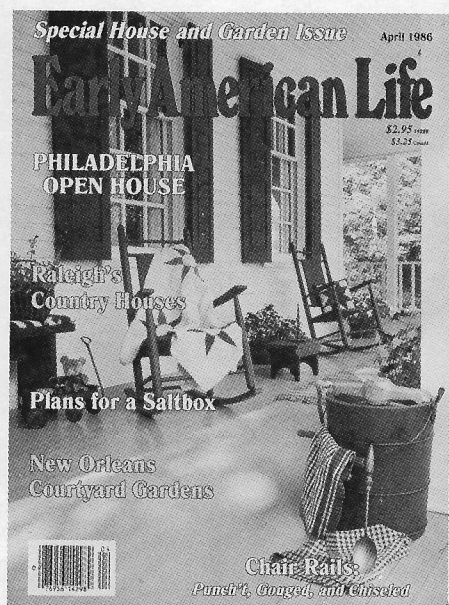


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VOLUME XXII, NUMBER 8 DECEMBER 1987

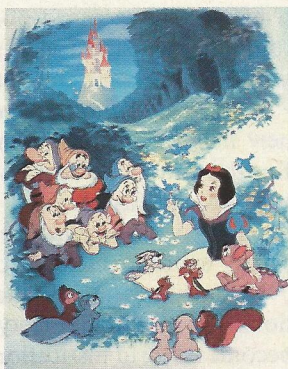


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Cover

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs celebrate their golden anniversary this year. Walt Disney brought them together in the premiere of his—and the world's—first full-length animated feature fifty years ago this month. Skeptics in the movie industry had questioned the viability of such a project, dubbing it "Disney's Folly." But *Snow White* was a phenomenal hit—and today it remains the most successful animated film in history.

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Editor's Desk

THE CEILING-HIGH BOOKCASE stood in the corner of my Aunt Martha's guest bedroom. For a grade-school-age farm boy during the early 1940s, it was a doorway to adventure, for it contained more than two hundred copies of the *National Geographic Magazine*—every year since 1926.

My aunt was a schoolteacher, and the magazines bore the marks of classroom use. Some had lost their distinctive yellow-bordered covers, and the paper along the spines was beginning to fray. But every treasured copy was filed in precise chronological order, and not an issue was missing.

Seated on the bedroom floor, I would spend hours poring through those *Geographics*. There were flights across continents and oceans with Lindbergh, Earhart, and Eckener; expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic with Byrd and Ellsworth, descents in eternal night with Beebe and his bathysphere, and ascents into the stratosphere with Piccard and Stevens. There was high adventure on the Cape Horn grain ships with Alan Villiers, the first automobile crossing of the high Asian deserts with the Citroën-Haardt Expedition, and remarkable archaeological discoveries in ancient Ur. And there were wonderful pictures: luminous Lumière Autochrome and Finlay color photographs of the remote Himalayas, of undersea life in the Caribbean, of marvels in all forty-eight states, of the circus (my favorite copy was a 1931 issue containing the portfolio "The Color Camera Explores the Country that Moves by Night"), . . . and of dusky maidens on tropical islands. There were fascinating paintings that re-created the cultures of the American Indian, the Mayas and the Aztecs, and ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome.

Eventually my aunt gave me her collection. And, duly nominated, I became a member of the Society and a subscriber.

Years later, when I became a magazine editor and a critical observer of illustrated publications, the *Geographic* gradually became the standard of excellence I used for comparison. And, when a tall and attractive redhead I met in Washington, D.C., mentioned that she was an employee of the National Geographic Society, that fact made her no less interesting. (We were later married.)

I still subscribe to the *National Geographic* (the annual renewal notice—a masterpiece of psychological salesmanship—notes that I am "A Valued Member Since 1946"), and the steadily growing collection has followed me across America three times. Now it fills several six-foot shelves in my bedroom office, threatening the integrity of the second-floor joists. If I am poorer for shipping those tons of magazines back and forth, I am certainly richer for the extended horizons they have provided.

Today the *National Geographic* seems better than ever, reaching new heights and exploring new frontiers with nearly every issue. But the old copies remain just as interesting to me. They have their own special fascination, for they are records of a world that no longer exists—irretrievably transformed by time, wars, and the steady encroachment of civilization.

Next month marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the National Geographic Society. During the course of that century it has become a world institution—publisher not only of a great magazine but of fine books and fascinating television programs—with nearly eleven million members in all but four of the world's countries. May it continue its quest for new adventures, discoveries, and natural wonders as long as they can still be found and experienced. ★

Ed Holm

Mailbox

Satisfied Reader

After nearly a year of reading *American History Illustrated* it finally dawned on me, while reading the October 1987 issue, why the magazine is so appealing. It is the diversity. For example, the October issue covered events from four different centuries—sixteenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth.

The stories are well written and informative. You bring to the reader an extra edge on history whether the story is about the wives of famous men, Frémont and Lafayette, or the Cabrillo Gravestone that many of us in the South had not heard of, to the notorious Al Capone and his nemesis Eliot Ness.

As a 1984 college graduate with a BA in History, I wish to thank you for your magazine. If I had subscribed sooner I probably would have taken more American history classes.

Mary Ann Edenfield
Savannah, Georgia

Wrong Floor, Wrong Year

In the story "A Mechanic Gave the World a Lift" [November 1987 issue], the author states that an Air Force bomber crashed into the eighty-ninth floor of the Empire State Building in 1943.

The bomber, a twin-engine B-25, crashed into the seventy-ninth floor on July 28, 1945.

The Sky Is Falling by Arthur Weinbarten gives the complete story.

Charles Nelcamp
Cincinnati, Ohio

American History Illustrated welcomes and values comments from our readers. While we endeavor to publish a representative sampling of this correspondence, we regret that limited space prevents us from printing every letter. Publication of reader comments does not imply editorial endorsement of the views expressed. Address correspondence to "The Mailbox," *American History Illustrated*, Box 8200, Harrisburg, PA 17105. ★

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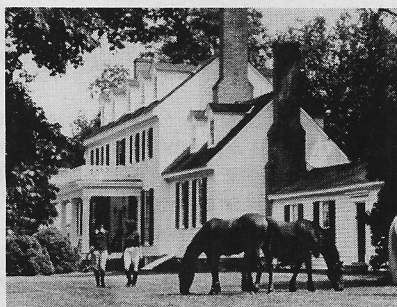
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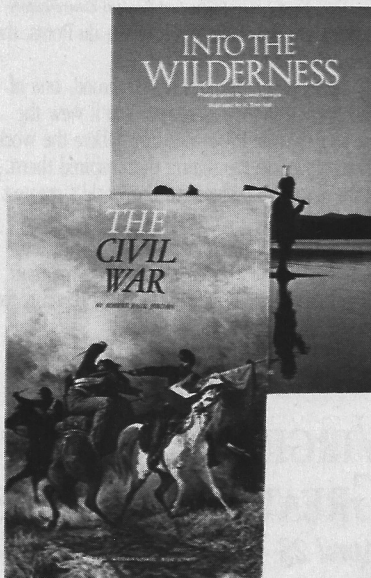
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National Geographic Books on American History

Over the past quarter-century, the National Geographic Society has published a number of excellent books focusing on various aspects of American history. Noteworthy for their high standards in content, accuracy, and specially-commissioned photography and artwork, the modestly priced volumes are among the best available for general reader use. All volumes listed here are currently available (to non-members as well as members of the Society) through National Geographic Educational Services, Department 87, Washington, D.C. 20036. Telephone toll free 1-800-368-2728 (weekdays, 8:30-4:00 E.T.). (A \$2.40 postage and handling fee applies to orders of \$5.01 to \$10.00; \$3.50 for orders of \$10.01 to \$25.00; \$4.25 for orders of \$25.01 to \$50.00.)



Into the Wilderness (208 pages, 1978; product no. 00252, \$6.35).

Explorers, trappers, and other trailbreakers of the American and Canadian frontiers are the focus of this volume. Chapters are devoted to priest-explorers Dominguez and Escalante, naturalist William Bartram, frontiersman Daniel Boone, Canadian explorers Alexander Mackenzie and David Thompson, Corps of Discovery leaders Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, pathfinder John Charles Frémont, and the mountain men of the fur trapping era.

Trails West (208 pages, 1979, product no. 00272, \$6.35).

The Oregon, California, and Santa Fe trails and other pioneer and trade routes by which the American frontier was settled are documented in text, paintings, photographs, and maps in this interesting volume.

Clues to America's Past (200 pages, 1976, product no. 00187, \$6.35).

By examining some significant archaeological research projects, this book shows how scholar-detective historians unravel the mysteries of the past from the clues artifacts provide. Lively accounts by archaeologists and others, plentiful color photos, and commissioned paintings combine to bring insight to the process of discovering the details of America's past.

The Revolutionary War (200 pages, 1967, product no. 00047, \$7.95).

This book gives an exciting and memorable account of the War for Independence, from its start with "the shot heard 'round the world" to the Yorktown surrender.

The Civil War (200 pages, 1969, product no. 00077, \$7.95).

From the years before the clash that divided America, through the start of the war, to the surrender at Appomattox, this book chronicles the suffering both North and South endured. Among the many paintings that illustrate the book, five commissioned from artist Richard Schlecht accurately depict key battles.

John Muir's Wild America (200 pages, 1976; product no. 00191, \$9.50).

This book retraces the paths travelled during the latter part of the nineteenth century by naturalist John Muir, who wandered the wilds of Georgia, Florida, California, and Alaska, and who inspired the creation of such national parks as Yosemite and Sequoia.

The Wild Shores: America's Beginnings (204 pages, 1974, product no. 00148, \$6.35).

This story of America's first European inhabitants chronicles the adventures and trials of colonists from Newfoundland to Spanish California, including the Roanoke, Jamestown, and Plymouth settlements.

Liberty: The Statue and the American Dream (304 pages, 1985, product no. 00622, \$34.95).

Published to coincide with the centennial of the Statue of Liberty, this large-format volume presents the history of the famous monument and the influx of immigrants whom it welcomed. Interviews and diary entries and letters from that time period are woven into the text.

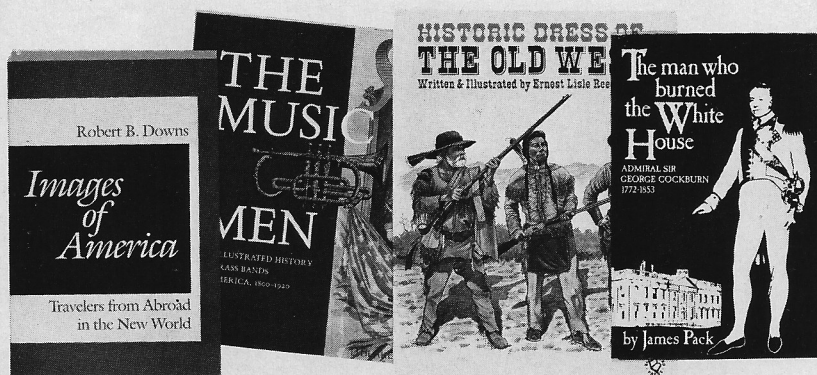
Visiting Our Past: America's Historylands (400 pages, 1977, 1986, product no. 00646, \$17.95).

This large-format, beautifully illustrated volume provides an overview of American history from colonization to industrialization. Seven distinct eras are identified and accompanied by photographs of corresponding historical sites suggested as interesting places for history enthusiasts to visit.

Preserving America's Past (200 pages, 1983, product no. 00420, \$9.50).

The preservation of pastimes, buildings, ships, crafts, locomotives, and other tangible and intangible relics of America's heritage is the focus of this book. Salvaged fragments of the past are quilted together to present a tribute to a growing history-consciousness among Americans. ★

History Bookshelf



Images of America: Travelers from Abroad in the New World by Robert B. Downs (*University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1987; 220 pages, \$24.95*).

Early accounts describing visitors' travel experiences and observations in America provide a unique look at a land that would be unrecognizable to the authors of those works today. University of Illinois professor Robert Downs here presents excerpts from forty of the most famous and influential of these accounts, including Charles Dickens's *American Notes* and Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Many of the accounts were highly critical. But critical or approving, all paint a fascinating portrait of young America and its citizens.

The Music Men: An Illustrated History of Brass Bands in America, 1800-1920 by Margaret Hindle Hazen and Robert M. Hazen (*Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 1987; 225 pages, illustrated, \$39.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper*).

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, local bands provided most Americans with their only ensemble music. This splendid, nostalgic collection of ephemera documents an era that is viewed by the authors as "an unparalleled mirror of American social history," a time when bands reflected what was best in American society—its sense of community, desire for self-improvement, patriotism, and joy of working together for the benefit of all. Heavily illustrated with fascinating photographs and engravings.

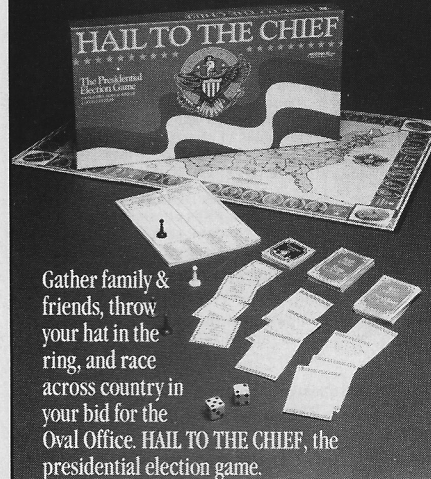
Historic Dress of the Old West written and illustrated by Ernest Lisle Reedstrom (*Blandford Press, distributed by Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., New York City, 1987; 160 pages, illustrated, \$19.95*).

One cannot help thinking of paper dolls when viewing this lavishly illustrated volume depicting typical western characters in period clothing. Indians, mountain men, buffalo hunters, outlaws, lawmen, dance hall girls, soldiers, cowboys, and even Mexican bandits are all pictured here, from Annie Oakley to Tom Horn (who is shown dangling from the end of a noose). The stylized but excellent drawings are accompanied by a narrative depicting the realities of western life. There is even a recipe for red bean mash in this definitive volume on uniforms, clothing, weapons, and accoutrements of the Old West during 1840 to 1900.

The Man Who Burned the White House: Admiral Sir George Cockburn, 1772-1853 by James Pack (*Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD, 1987; 288 pages, illustrated, \$21.95*).

Admiral of the Fleet Sir George Cockburn is best remembered as the sailor who planned and executed the burning of Washington (1814) during the War of 1812, and who was later responsible for seeing Napoleon into exile (1815-16). He once served alongside Horatio Nelson, and in later life became a member of Parliament and eventually a First Naval Lord. This is the first full-length biography of his life and career, authored by Naval Captain James Pack of the Royal Naval Museum in Portsmouth, England. ★

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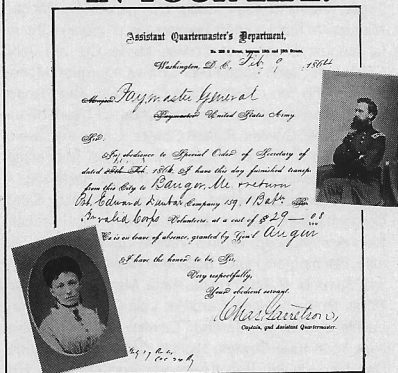
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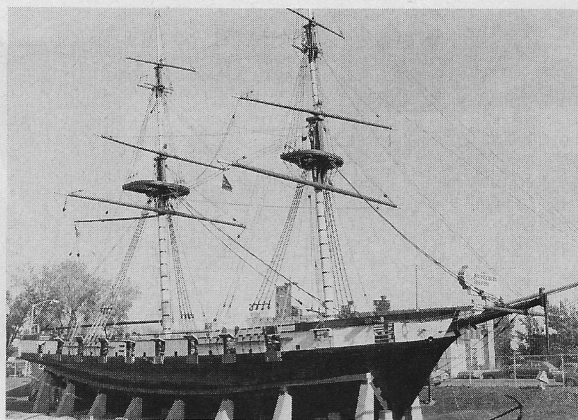
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I certify the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

ED HOLM, Editor

History Today



USS Niagara Restoration

The brig USS *Niagara*, the only surviving ship of her type from the War of 1812, is being restored by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC).

During the Battle of Lake Erie in 1812, the *Niagara*, under the leadership of Oliver Hazard Perry, disabled the British flagship *Detroit*, leading to British defeat and the surrender of its fleet to the Americans. This victory helped to secure a peaceful settlement of land disputes along the Canadian-American border.

According to internationally recognized designer Melbourne Smith, designer/director of the restoration, more than forty pieces of the original vessel will be incorporated into the restored vessel "The finished *Niagara* will not just be an example of a type, she'll be the real thing," says Smith.

Since the *Niagara* was raised from her resting place in Misery Bay in 1913, she has been repeatedly repaired and patched. These repairs moved the ship away from its original design.

A variety of craftsmen will use early nineteenth-century traditional shipbuilding techniques for the restoration, with the goal of producing a fully operational sailing vessel on the Great Lakes. Archaeological research conducted on the dismantled pieces will ensure historical accuracy in construction.

Interpreters at the restoration site will explain the history of the ship and the ongoing work, which will be open to the public.

For further information contact the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Box 1026,

Harrisburg, PA, 17120, or call 717-783-9882.

Andersonville Prison Revamped

Partial reconstruction of the Andersonville Prison camp stockade and its "deadline" began in October. This Civil War prison stockade is located in the Andersonville National Historic Site near Americus, Georgia, and consists of a national cemetery, visitor center, and museum, established in 1970 to commemorate the sacrifices of American prisoners of war.

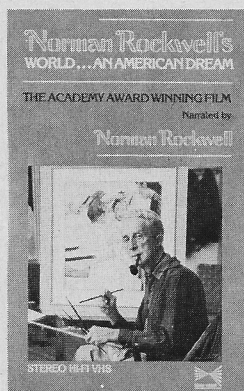
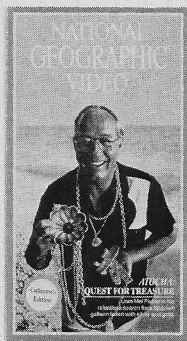
The Confederate prison was used from February 1864 to April 1865 to hold captured Federal enlisted men. Health conditions within the log stockade were abominable. Disease and death rates were extremely high due to poor sanitation, overcrowding, exposure, and malnutrition. In the summer of 1864, 32,899 men were confined at Andersonville. Nearly 13,000 prisoners are estimated to have died there.

Nothing remains of the original structure, so reconstruction will be based on evidence obtained during earlier digs when a team of archaeologists uncovered a portion of the original wooden stockade.

An area known as the "deadline"—a line inside the stockade parallel to the palisade "over which no prisoner was allowed to go . . . under penalty of being shot"—will also be reconstructed.

The park is open daily from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. For more information, contact the Andersonville National Historic Site, Andersonville GA 31711, 912-924-0343. ★

Sight & Sound



Atocha: Quest for Treasure (National Geographic Society, available through Vestron Video, P.O. Box 4000, Stamford CT 06907, 203-968-0000; VHS or Beta, 60 minutes, \$29.95).

In 1622 the homeward-bound Spanish galleon *Nuestra Señora de Atocha* and a sister ship sailed from Havana, Cuba, only to sink in a severe storm off the Florida Keys. The *Atocha* carried 265 passengers and forty tons of gold and silver, plus some seventy pounds of emerald contraband from the New World. For more than three centuries thereafter, the wreck eluded all who sought her. In 1985, after a sixteen-year search fraught with adventure, disappointment, legal battles, and bitter tragedy, famed treasure hunter Mel Fisher finally found *Atocha* and her \$100 to \$400 million in booty. Sadly, among the casualties of the nearly-two-decade search were a son and daughter-in-law, drowned when Fisher's salvage vessel capsized during a storm. Artifacts from the *Atocha* and her sister ship, which Fisher also found, provide a rare glimpse into the seventeenth century.

Norman Rockwell's World . . . An American Dream (Home Vision, 945 Concord, Framingham MA 01701, toll free 1-800-262-8600 or 617-879-1720 in Massachusetts; VHS or Beta, 30 minutes, \$24.95).

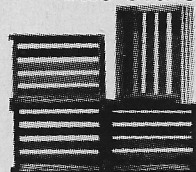
As one of America's most beloved artists, the late Norman Rockwell captured the hopes and ideals of millions of Americans during his four decades as an illustrator. This superb film, which features Rockwell himself as narrator, artfully juxtaposes real-life Stockbridge,

Massachusetts, residents going about their daily business with the Rockwellian faces these friends and acquaintances clearly inspired. Says Rockwell of his long career, "I just painted the way I would like life to be. . . . Every once in a while someone says I'm a historian of a better period in American history. It was a good period. But I'm not a historian—I just painted the things I saw around me." Through the use of old film footage, dramatic re-enactments, and Rockwell's own art, this thoroughly delightful and sentimental film shows how the artist faithfully recorded the world he saw, reflecting the aspirations and concerns of a whole generation.

History of the Motor Car (Karol Media, 22 Riverview Drive, Wayne NJ 07470-3191; 201-628-9111; VHS or Beta, three 60-minute tapes, \$39.95 per tape or \$99.95 for the series).

When one thinks of early automobiles, Henry Ford's now-legendary Model T springs to mind. But the origins of the motor car go back much farther, to nineteenth-century France and Germany where the majority of automobile pioneering took place long before Ford became a household name. Viewers of these tapes learn about the men who gave their names to automobiles: Peugeot, Renault, Mercedes, Fiat, and others. The series dramatically highlights the motor car's history in such detail that it will appeal primarily to antique auto enthusiasts. A unique aspect of the tapes is the re-creation of early motoring scenes on backwoods dirt roads, using actors and actresses in period attire, giving the appearance of a documentary. ★

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By 1842 Charles Dickens had won fame in the United States as well as in England. But his visit to the New World brought disenchantment to both the writer and Americans.

“The Most-Hated Man in America”

by Ernest L. Abel

CHARLES DICKENS, the celebrated British author and creator of *Pickwick*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Oliver Twist*, *Barnaby Rudge*, *Little Nell*, and dozens of other colorful literary characters was coming to America. The writer looked forward to the New World with anticipation, and the nation, in turn, prepared to welcome Dickens as no other guest before him. But within weeks after his arrival in January 1842, Dickens had become disenchanted with the United States and its people, and, before the year was over, American goodwill and admiration would turn to resentment and animosity. It was an uncharacteristically bitter episode in the career of one of England's greatest authors.

Dickens had first thought about visiting the United States in the late 1830s, after receiving a letter from Washington Irving, in which the American author complimented him for the character “Little Nell” in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. The two writers soon became regular correspondents, with Irving encouraging Dickens to visit America, promising him that the trip “would be a triumph . . . from one end of the States to the other, as was never known in any nation.” Their continuing correspondence—and Dickens's growing curiosity about the young nation that had seemingly implemented democratic ideals so well—finally prompted his resolve to make the journey.

Before embarking for the United States on January 4, 1842, Dickens, a working writer, promised his London publisher that he would keep a travel diary with the intent of publishing it later.

Other English and European writers had previously written about their visits to the United States. Harriet Martineau's *Soci-*



Dickens on America and Americans:
“This is not the republic of my imagination. . . . The more I think of its youth and strength, the poorer and more trifling in a thousand aspects it appears in my eyes.”

ety in America and Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* both criticized the country. But Dickens had an open mind about the United States. He told Andrew Bell, author of another anti-American work, “In going to a New World one must utterly forget and put out of sight the Old one and bring none of its customs or observations into comparison.”

Dickens, however, would find this objectivity more difficult to maintain than he had imagined. His travel diary, published after his return to England and titled *American Notes*, would deride the United States and infuriate Americans.

AFTER A BRIEF STOP in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the mail steamer *Britannia* carrying Dickens and his wife Catherine arrived in Boston on January 22, 1842, to the cheers of thousands of his fans.

The twenty-nine-year-old author had not yet grown a beard or mustache. His face was smooth and pale, his dark brown hair long and in ringlets. He was slender, and although of average height, seemed taller than he really was. Dickens was especially distinguished by his beaming eyes, which were large and seemed to take in everything they saw.

A journalist for the *Boston Transcript* who interviewed Dickens shortly after his arrival found him, at this early point in the American tour, friendly and good-natured: “We had an hour's conversation with him last evening, and found him one of the most frank, sociable, noble-hearted gentlemen we ever met with, perfectly free from all haughtiness or apparent self-importance. . . . In fact, he is just such a person as we had supposed him to be, judging from his writings, which have acquired a popularity almost unprecedented in this country.”

The Dickensses stayed at the Tremont House, Boston's finest hotel, while in the city. Boston at that time had a population of about 125,000. During his first evening in America, Dickens enjoyed roaming the Boston streets with the Earl of Mulgrave, a friend from the voyage. He found the place enchanting.

After that first quiet night, however, Dickens discovered that everywhere he went, throngs of American fans were waiting to greet him. The next afternoon, Dickens's admirers lined the streets along the way to the State House at the top of Beacon Hill. At first he en-

joyed the attention. “I can give you no conception of my welcome here,” he wrote to one of his friends. “There never was a king or emperor upon the earth so cheered and followed by crowds and entertained in public at splendid balls and dinners. . . .”

When attending Boston's Tremont Theatre, Dickens, who wrote under the pen name “Boz,” was greeted with “Boz Waltzes” composed especially in his honor. The audience applauded him nine times. Appropriately, the performances that night were *Charles O'Malley* (based on Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby*) and a skit titled *Boz: A Masque in Phrenologic*. The theme of the latter dramatization subtly pointed out the injustice inflicted on authors whose works were reprinted without payment because there were no international copyright laws. The issue was of special import to Dickens, whose works were often serialized by American newspapers without any profit going to him.

Dickens's visit to Boston (called “Boz-town” by jealous Americans in other cities) included many such social engagements. Demands for his time became so great that he had to hire a social secretary, George W. Putnam, for \$10 a month plus board.

At one such social event, Dickens met and dined with Boston's literary elite, including Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Nathan Hale, Jr., Richard Henry Dana, Jr., and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Dickens was particularly flattered by the fifteen-dollar-a-plate charge these men had willingly paid for the opportunity to dine with him.

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC'S adulation of Dickens continued at a fever pitch that grew increasingly demanding and intrusive, and the visitor soon became irritated by the constant attention: “I can do nothing that I want to do, go nowhere I want to go, and see nothing that I want to see,” he complained in a letter to his friend and biographer John Forster. “If I turn into the street, I am followed by a multitude. If I stay at home, the house becomes, with callers, like a fair.”

But Dickens found consolation and support for his first admiring views of America in his tours of Boston institutions that aided the unfortunate. He visited the Perkins Institute for the Blind, the State Hospital for the Insane, the Reform School for Juvenile Offenders, and the House of Corrections. Dickens thought these

social services and the admirable working conditions he encountered at the Lowell, Massachusetts, industrial mills were evidence of how well democracy worked in America.

Dickens also admired the American universities. They “disseminate no prejudices; rear no bigots; dig up the burial ashes of no old superstitions; exclude no man because of his religious opinions; above all, in their whole course of study and instruction, recognize a world and a broad one too, lying beyond the college walls,” he observed.

Social functions, however, continued to wear on the visitor. Finally he began canceling engagements to dinners, parties, and dances held in his honor, upsetting many a Boston hostess. As a result, Dickens became the subject of gossip among the normally restrained, cultivated Bostonians. They criticized his mode of dress (especially his green and red velvet waistcoats), and made allusions to his indiscretions, including an occasion when he combed his hair while at the dinner table.

These minor infractions were nothing compared to the speech Dickens gave on February 1, by which he further incited the outrage of the American public. At a banquet that was to be the climax of Dickens’s Boston stay, Josiah Quincy, president of the Massachusetts state senate, introduced the British author as a social reformer: “He infuses a moral tone into everything. He is not only a portrayer of public wrongs, but he makes men feel that there is no condition so degrading as not to be visited by gleams of a higher nature.”

But Dickens surprised those in attendance by devoting a great portion of his speech not to aiding the less fortunate, but to a somewhat controversial topic—international copyright law. He proposed a law to prohibit the pirating (use without payment) of a foreign writer’s work. Dickens said he was “the greatest loser” by the absence of such protection, but he also mentioned American authors. “I hope the time is not far distant,” he said, “when they [writers], in America, will receive of right some substantial profit and return in England for their labours; and when we, in England, shall receive some substantial profit and return in America from ours.”

The next day newswriters vehemently attacked the British visitor’s speech, claiming it was insultingly self-seeking for him to have emphasized his income when the banquet had been prepared to honor him.

The controversy followed Dickens throughout his American tour. In Hartford, Connecticut, his next stop, he spoke again on the subject. This time he mentioned the plight of debt-ridden Walter Scott, then a popular author with Americans. Scott “might not have sunk beneath the mighty pressure on his brain,” Dickens said, if an international copyright law had existed.

In the speech’s aftermath Dickens met with the same criticism he had received in Boston. A writer in the *Hartford Times* stated: “It happens that we want no advice on the subject and it will be better for Mr. Dickens if he refrains from introducing the subject hereaf-

ter.” The harsh response his orations triggered, Dickens wrote Forster, had caused him to question the American principle of freedom of speech in controversial matters.

While in Hartford Dickens also encountered the state’s Blue Laws, which he found archaic and puritanical. “Among other enlightened provisions, any citizen who could be proved to have kissed his wife on Sunday, was punishable, I believe with the stocks,” he wrote.

FROM CONNECTICUT Dickens traveled to New York. During the 1840s about 300,000 people lived in the city, most of them on the lower end of Manhattan Island. Uptown was Fifth Avenue and Tenth. Hoboken was a summer resort.

In New York, Dickens and Washington Irving finally met, and the two became even closer friends. Dickens spent three weeks in the city. His lifelong preoccupation with the downtrodden and unfortunate in life took him to the city’s Alms House, Lunatic Asylum, and Island Jail, each of which he found dismal and depressing. But the city’s infamous prison, The Tombs, *outraged* him: “Such indecent and disgusting dungeons as these cells, would bring disgrace upon the most despotic empire in the world.” During his tour of the prison he found an inmate in “a small bare cell, into which the light enters through a high clink in the wall. There is a rude means of washing, a table, and a bedstead.” In another cell he saw a man’s clothes scattered on the floor. “Don’t you oblige the prisoners to be orderly, and put such things away?” he asked.

“Where should they put ’em?” the jailer answered.

“Not on the ground surely. What do you say to hanging them up?”

“Why, I say that’s just it. When they had hooks they would hang themselves, so they’re taken out of every cell, and there’s only the marks left where they used to be.”

The copyright controversy surfaced again in New York, but there Dickens found defenders in Cornelius Mathews, editor of the *Arcturus* and Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune*. Their supportive words and a circulating petition for international copyright law strengthened his determination to adamantly continue his copyright crusade.*

Dickens’s trip from New York to Philadelphia was his first encounter with American rail travel, and this particular mode of transportation in the United States especially bothered him. The trains, he said, were very uncomfortable. Dickens was used to England’s rail system, one of the most advanced in the world at that time. In America, train compartments were crowded and stuffy. The windows were closed in winter, and the heat from the stoves was so intense it gave him a headache. “There are no first and second class carriages as with us; but there is a gentleman’s car and a ladies’ car:

*An international copyright agreement was not entered into by the United States until 1892. Dickens did not live to see it happen.

The main distinction between which is that in the first, everybody smokes and in the second, nobody does. As a black man never travels with a white one, there is also a negro car, which is a great blundering clumsy chest, such as Gulliver put to sea in, from the Kingdom of Brobdingnag. There is a great deal of jolting, a great deal of noise, a great deal of wall, not much window, a locomotive engine, a shriek, and a bell."

Steamboat passage Dickens also found disconcerting. He continually felt cramped and unable to move about freely. He was particularly appalled by the filth in the trains and boats—far different from the relatively sanitary conditions of English public transit.

He called Philadelphia "a handsome city, but distractingly regular. After walking about it for an hour or two, I felt that I would have given the world for a crooked street." Years later he claimed to have recurrent nightmares of being locked in rectangular Philadelphia, unable to escape.

While in the city he visited the Eastern Penitentiary. Its psychological brutality of enforced silence and solitary confinement disturbed him as had the physical brutality he had witnessed in The Tombs.

Edgar Allan Poe welcomed the British author to Philadelphia by sending him a copy of his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, and Dickens in turn invited Poe to visit him at the United States Hotel. Although he was glad to meet Poe, Dickens found many other Philadelphians to be impolite and disingenuous. On one occasion some of the city's leading citizens sent Dickens a note asking if they could meet briefly with him before he left the city. Dickens agreed, and the group's leader, Colonel Florence, inserted a newspaper advertisement announcing, to Dickens's dismay, that the British author would be willing "to shake hands with his friends." Dickens was even more appalled when he emerged from his hotel and discovered six hundred people waiting to do just that. He immediately turned back into the hotel, but the landlord warned him that if he refused there would surely be a riot. Regretfully the writer went back outside and for two hours shook hands.

Dickens's impression of the City of Brotherly Love was further tarnished when he discovered that the innkeeper had overcharged him, billing him \$9 a day for meals that Dickens, his wife, and their maid Anne had not even eaten there.

FROM PHILADELPHIA Dickens went to Washington, where he met President John Tyler, former president John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, and other politicians. He visited both the Senate and House of Representatives and was disheartened by the antics of the legislators. "I saw in them, the wheels that move the meanest perversion of virtuous Political Machinery that the worst tools ever wrought. . . . It is the game of these men, and of their profligate organs, to make the strife of politics so fierce and brutal, and so destructive of all self-respect in worthy men, that sensitive and delicate-

minded persons shall be kept aloof, and they, and such as they, be left to battle their selfish views unchecked. And thus this lowest of all scrambling fights goes on, and they who in other countries would, from their intelligence and station, most aspire to make the laws, do here recoil the farthest from that degradation."

Of all the customs Dickens observed while in America, he was offended most by the habit of tobacco spitting, especially in Washington, which he called "the headquarters of tobacco-tinctured saliva." Outside the president's office, he wrote, those waiting to see the nation's chief executive all chewed "mighty quids of tobacco. . . . They all constantly squirted forth upon the carpet a yellow saliva which quite altered its pattern." "In all the public places of America," Dickens commented, "this filthy custom is recognized. In the courts of law, the judge has his spittoon, the crier his, the witness his, and the prisoner his; while the jurymen and spectators are provided for, as, so many who in the course of nature must desire to spit incessantly. In the hospitals, the students of medicine are requested, by notices upon the wall, to eject their tobacco juice into the boxes provided for that purpose, and not to discolour the stairs. In public buildings, visitors are implored, through the same agency, to squirt the essence of their quids, or 'plugs,' as I have heard them called by gentlemen learned in this kind of sweetmeat, into the national spittoons, and not about the bases of the marble columns. But in some parts, this custom is inseparably mixed up with every meal and morning call, and with all the transaction of social life."

Table manners also dismayed him: "Those who . . . help themselves several times usually seek their knives and forks meditatively, until they have decided what to take next: then pull them out of their mouths: put them in the dish: help themselves; and fall to work again."

Next Dickens traveled to Baltimore, where he first encountered slavery—an institution he found repulsive, especially in the far worse forms he later saw in Virginia. "Its presence filled me with a sense of shame and self-reproach," Dickens declared. Apparently this was the final straw, and he wrote to his friend, actor William Charles Macready, in London, "this is not the republic of my imagination. . . . The more I think of its youth and strength, the poorer and more trifling in a thousand aspects it appears in my eyes. In everything of which it has made a boast—excepting its education of the people and its care for poor children—it sinks immeasurably below the level I had placed it upon; and England, even England, bad and faulty as the old land is, and miserable as millions of her people are, rises in comparison."

Recommended additional reading: Images of America: Travelers from Abroad in the New World by Robert B. Downs (University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, Illinois, 1987); Dickens on America and the Americans edited by Michael Slater (University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, 1978); Charles Dickens in America by W.G. Wilkens (Haskel House, 1970); and American Notes by Charles Dickens (Oxford University Press, 1957).



**The American Press on Dickens:
“The most coarse, vulgar, impudent and
superficial mind” ever to write about
“this original remarkable country . . .
a narrow-minded, conceited cockney.”**

Dickens's itinerary also took him to Cincinnati, Louisville, St. Louis, Columbus, Sandusky, and parts of Canada. He traveled as far west as the Mississippi River. Mark Twain would later write fondly of the river; Dickens found it hideously slimy—a place never to see again except in nightmares.

By journey's end, Dickens had determined that the United States was home for most of the world's “intensified bores.” Americans, he felt, spent too much time in “eternal prosy-conversation about dollars and politics, the only two subjects they ever converse about, or can converse about. . . .”

DICKENS DEPARTED from New York for England on June 7, 1842. As soon as he was back in London he began putting his diary in order for publication. The last chapter of *American Notes* he reserved for his most insulting remarks about Americans. The essence of the American national character, he said, was “Universal Distrust.” “You carry this jealousy and distrust into every transition of public life. By repelling worthy men of your legislative assemblies, it has bred up a class of candidates for the suffrage, who, in their every art, disgrace your institutions and your people's choice.” What distressed him even more was his belief that Americans prided themselves on this distrust and seemed to regard it “as an instance of . . . great sagacity and acuteness . . . shrewdness and independence.”

The book was finished and on the British market within six months of Dickens's return to London. News that Dickens was working on a book casting Americans in a less than favorable light was somehow leaked to the American press. Before the British editions were on the American market, thousands of pirated copies were compiled from proof sheets an American journalist obtained from a Bradbury and Evans pressman he bribed.

A forged letter purportedly written by Dickens and summarizing his unflattering commentary was also printed.

Newspapers across America reacted to the letter with outrage. “Dickens is a Fool, and a Liar,” read one typical headline. The English writer was branded a base ingrate and was reminded that during the American tour he had been given not a mere reception but rather a tremendous ovation. The *New Haven Daily Herald* was caustic: “Thank you, Mr. Boz. The next time you or any

other ‘well bred’ book makers from foreign parts, come to this country, we think it likely that you will be spared the opportunity of witnessing the ‘glaring faults’ of American society. Our nation will learn wisdom if they have much more of this kind of experience. . . . We have heard of cool insolence before, but we think this goes beyond the common limit.”

The *Boston Courier* attacked Dickens's breeding: “A return like this, for the kindness and attention shown to Mr. Dickens must excite towards that individual only indignation and contempt. Which is to be looked upon with the most charitable eye, a little awkwardness of manner in performing an act of hospitality, or such absolute baseness of heart as is exhibited by Charles Dickens? [He] may prate, in his arrogance, as much as he pleases, of a ‘well-bred man from abroad!’ If good breeding produces such spleen, ingratitude, and depravity, as mark the letter to which we refer, long may the Americans be spared from it!”

The American press reacted immediately and similarly to the book itself. A *New York Herald* writer called Dickens “the most coarse, vulgar, impudent and superficial mind” that had ever written about “this original remarkable country.” His vision of America, a *Herald* writer stated, was that of a “narrow-minded, conceited cockney.”

Curiously, the English press was likewise dismayed by the book. Some contended that Dickens's motive for visiting the United States had been, as Sam Weller had said in *Pickwick Papers*, to “have a passage ready taken for ‘Merriker; and then let him come back and write a book about the ‘Merriker, as’ll pay all his expenses and more, if he blows ‘em up enough.”

Although Dickens had been in the United States for only five months and so could not have obtained a full knowledge of the country, many of his observations were accurate and were recognized as such by some Americans. Dickens's friends, Longfellow and Cornelius Felton (a Boston professor of Greek), liked *American Notes*, calling it a “capital book; lively, spirited, true and good-humored.”

Not the descriptions so much as the emotion behind them turned Americans against Dickens. Few could quarrel with the odious tobacco spitting that so affronted him or the inhumane prisons that appalled him.

Continued on page 48



Responding to late nineteenth-century America's love affair with science, thirty-three men founded the National Geographic Society one hundred years ago.

“A Society for the Increase and Diffusion of Geographical Knowledge”

by C.D.B. Bryan



ON JANUARY 13, 1888, a damp, chilly Friday evening in the nation's capital, thirty-three gentlemen made their way by foot, on horseback, or by elegant private carriages through the fog to the Cosmos Club, a club notable over the preceding decade for its ability to draw upon Washington's scientific elite for its members. The thirty-three gentlemen—bearded, mustached, in heavy dark suits with high stiff collars and somber four-in-hand ties tucked into waistcoats crossed by thick gold chains—had been invited to gather at the clubhouse, situated on Lafayette Square diagonally across from the White House, to consider “the advisability of organizing a society for the increase and diffusion of geographical knowledge.”

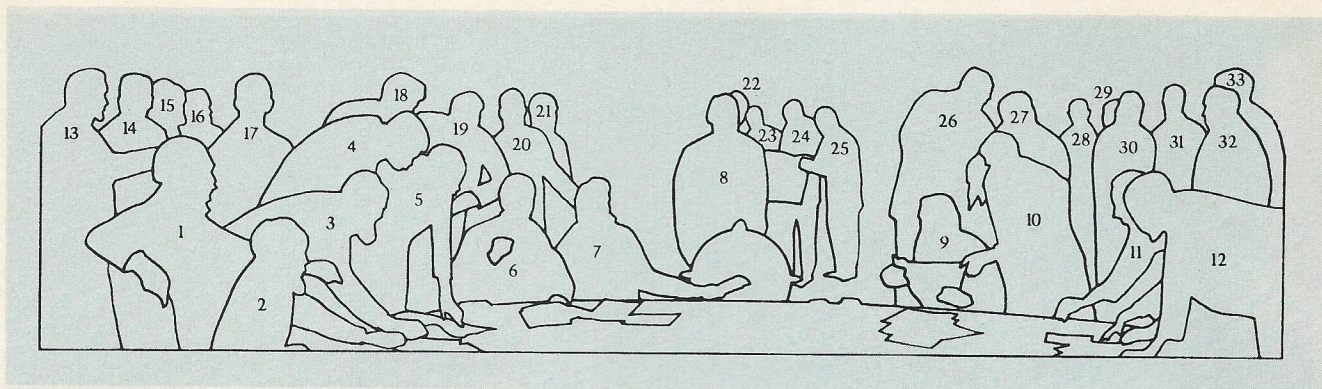
They were geographers, explorers, military officers,

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Organizers of the National Geographic Society meet at the Washington, D.C., Cosmos Club on January 13, 1888. Within the year the Society's National Geographic Magazine began publication. Now at its one-hundred-year mark, the Society numbers nearly eleven million members in 170 nations. For a key to this painting of the founding fathers, turn the page.

lawyers, meteorologists, cartographers, naturalists, bankers, educators, biologists, engineers, geodesists, topographers, inventors. As one of their own put it, they were the “first explorers of the Grand Canyon and the Yellowstone, those who had carried the American flag farthest north, who had measured the altitude of our famous mountains, traced the windings of our coasts and rivers, determined the distribution of flora and fauna, enlightened us in the customs of the aborigines, and marked out the path of storm and flood.”

There was the prematurely aged Brigadier General



Founders of the National Geographic Society (depicted by artist Stanley Meltzoff based on individual portraits) include: 1) Charles J. Bell, banker; 2) Israel C. Russell, geologist; 3) Commodore George W. Melville, naval officer and engineer; 4) Frank Baker, anatomist; 5) W. B. Powell, educator; 6) Brig. Gen. A.W. Greely, army officer and polar explorer; 7) Grove Karl Gilbert, geologist; 8) John Wesley Powell, geologist and explorer; 9) Gardiner Greene Hubbard, lawyer and first president of the Society; 10) Henry Gannett, geographer; 11) William H. Dall, naturalist; 12) Edward E. Hayden, meteorologist; 13) Herbert G. Ogden, topographer; 14) Arthur P. Davis, engineer; 15) Gilbert Thompson, topographer; 16) Marcus Baker, cartographer; 17) George Kennan, explorer; 18) James Howard Gore, educator; 19) O.H. Tittmann, geodesist; 20) Henry W. Henshaw, naturalist; 21) George Brown Goode, naturalist; 22) Cleveland Abbe, meteorologist; 23) Comdr. John R. Bartlett; 24) Henry Mitchell, engineer; 25) Robert Muldrow II, geologist; 26) Comdr. Winfield S. Schley; 27) Capt. C.E. Dutton; 28) W.D. Johnson, topographer; 29) James C. Welling, educator; 30) C. Hart Merriam, chief, U.S. Biological Survey; 31) Capt. Rogers Birnie, Jr.; 32) A.H. Thompson, geographer; 33) Samuel S. Gannett, geographer.

Adolphus Washington Greely, chief signal officer of the United States Army, who seven years earlier had led an expedition farther north than any had gone before and had become stranded. Not rescued until 1884, only Greely and six of the original twenty-five men were found still alive. There was the heroic, pain-wracked geologist and explorer John Wesley Powell, who had lost his right arm in the bloody battle of Shiloh and seven years later, in 1869, led the first expedition by boat down the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River. There was brisk, assertive lawyer-capitalist Gardiner Greene Hubbard, friend and adviser to presidents, statesmen, and scientists, and financier and promoter of his son-in-law Alexander Graham Bell's experiments.

There was George Kennan, dashing student of Russian affairs and veteran of a five-thousand-mile trek across Siberia; Henry Gannett, distinguished chief geographer of the U.S. Geological Survey and a pioneer mapmaker of Colorado and Wyoming's Rocky Mountains; and O.H. Tittmann, tenacious leader of surveying expeditions and a future superintendent of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. There was naturalist William H. Dall, pioneer explorer of Alaska; geologist Robert Muldrow II, who would measure Mount McKinley; and meteorologist Edward E. Hayden, who had lost his leg in a landslide. There was noted physician and naturalist C. Hart Merriam, chief of the U.S. Biological Survey; and stolid, persevering Navy Commodore George W. Melville, chief engineer of the relief expedition ship that four years earlier had broken through Arctic ice to rescue Greely and his surviving companions.

Now as Melville and Greely, Hubbard and Powell, Kennan and Gannett, Tittmann and Merriam, Dall and Muldrow and Hayden and the others collected about the huge, round mahogany table in the Cosmos Club's Assembly Hall with its dim portraits, its gas-lit chandeliers, and its large standing globe with so much of its landmasses and oceans as yet unexplored, they agreed unhesitatingly about the necessity of a geographic society in Washington, D.C., then the center not only of the nation's politics but also its science.

Warmed by after-dinner coffee, brandy, and the blazing hardwood fire, they readily approved passage of the resolution offered by the U.S. Geological Survey's A.H. Thompson that the Society be organized "on as broad and liberal a basis in regard to qualifications for membership as is consistent with its own well-being and the dignity of the science it represents." A nine-man committee was appointed to prepare a draft constitution and plan of organization, both to be presented at the second meeting, to be held the following week, and the National Geographic Society was born. Two weeks later the founders elected Gardiner Greene Hubbard—not himself a scientist, but one deeply interested in science—as their first president.

THE SOCIETY'S FIRST MAGAZINE, published in October 1888, was a slim, tall, octavo-sized scientific brochure with a somewhat forbidding-looking terra-cotta-colored cover. An "Announcement" published in its opening pages articulated the Society's aims.

"The National Geographic Society has been organized 'to increase and diffuse geographic knowledge,'

and the publication of a Magazine has been determined upon as one means of accomplishing these purposes.

"It will contain memoirs, essays, notes, correspondence, reviews, etc., relating to geographic matters. As it is not intended to be simply the organ of the Society, its pages will be open to all persons interested in Geography, in the hope that it may become a channel of intercommunications, stimulate geographic investigation and prove an acceptable medium for the publication of results. . . .

"As it is hoped to diffuse as well as to increase knowledge, due prominence will be given to the educational aspects of geographic matters, and efforts will be made to stimulate an interest in original sources of information.

"In addition to organizing, holding regular fortnightly meetings for presenting scientific and popular communications, and entering upon the publication of a Magazine, considerable progress has been made in the preparation of a Physical Atlas of the United States.

"The Society . . . has at present an active membership of about two hundred persons. But there is no limitation to the number of members, and it will welcome both leaders and followers in geographic science, in order to better accomplish the objects of its organization."

Over the years, the earliest volumes of the magazine have been unfairly criticized for being "dreadfully scientific, suitable for diffusing geographic knowledge among those who already had it and scaring off the rest." Certainly the contents of the early issues were characterized by a determinedly academic approach; but scattered among such articles as "The Classification of Geographic Forms by Genesis" (Vol I, No. 1) and "The Economic Aspects of Soil Erosion" (October 1896) were other, livelier essays that hinted at future directions for both the magazine and society. Buried within the pages of the very first issue, in Everett Hayden's report of The Great Storm of March 11-14, 1888, was a compelling account of the gallant efforts by which a New York pilot boat survived the violence and long duration of the storm. Vol. I, No. 3, published in July 1889, contained "The Rivers and Valleys of Pennsylvania," inaugurating what would be one hundred years of the magazine's coverage of the states. Vol. I, No. 4, appeared three months later with "Across Nicaragua with Transit and Machete," an eloquent personal narrative of his adventures as a surveyor for a proposed trans-Nicaraguan canal by R.E. Peary, a young naval civil engineer who would later gain fame in less temperate climates.

Two years later the Society published in its April 1891 issue "Summary of Reports on the Mt. St. Elias Expedition," which, although jointly sponsored with the U.S. Geological Survey, was the Society's first "venture into exploration." Expedition leader Israel C. Russell's first-person adventure-narrative in the following month's *Geographic* established the magazine's pattern for reporting future explorations. Yet another "first" was the

appearance in the November 1896 *Geographic* of a photograph of a half-nude Zulu bride and bridegroom in their wedding finery, both staring full face into the camera—the groom with obvious courage and pride, the bride looking somewhat less stoic.

By January 1896 the erratically issued *National Geographic Magazine* became a monthly. The magazine's terra-cotta cover was discarded in favor of a buff cover, with the contents, editors, authors, and the legend "An Illustrated Monthly" superimposed upon a latitudinal and longitudinal lined globe. In an effort to increase circulation, the Society's Board of Managers offered copies at 25 cents each through newsstands and began to accept advertising.

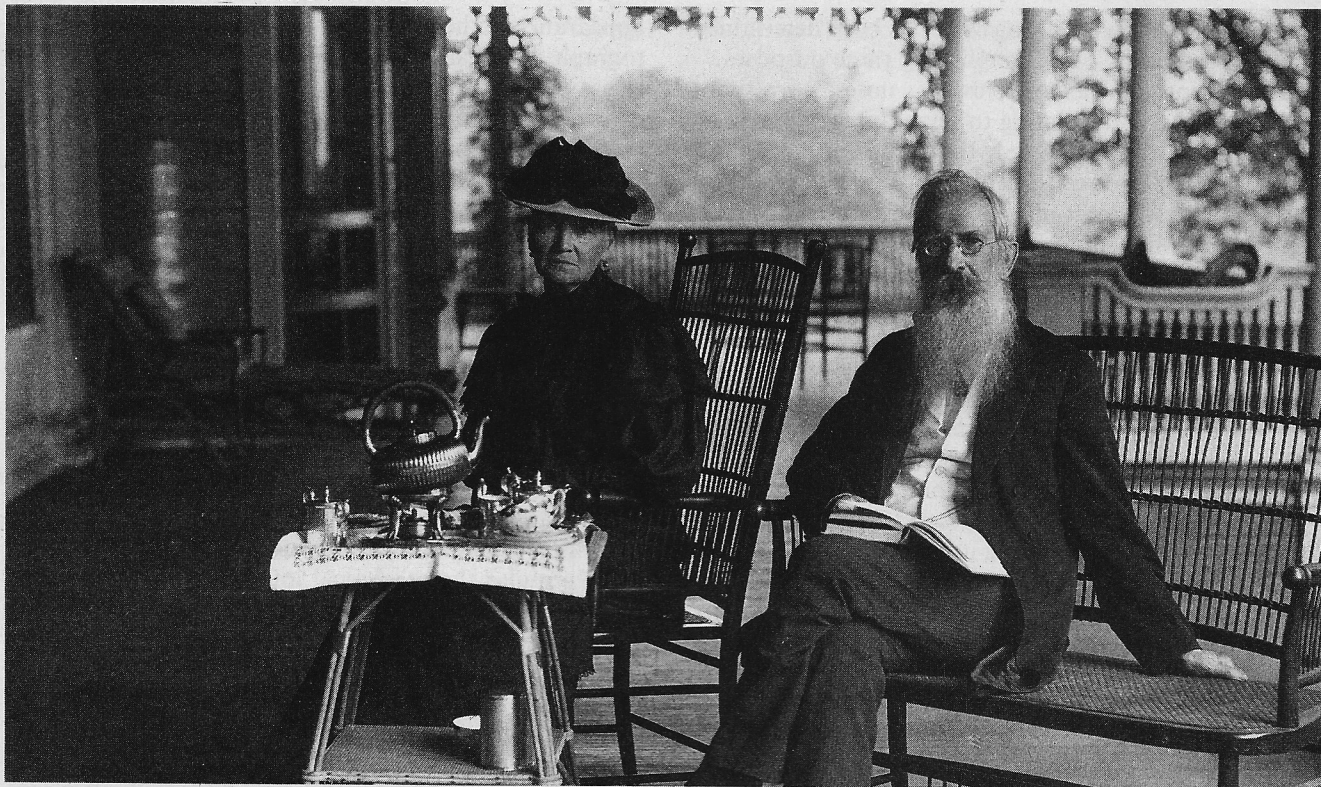
DESPITE ITS FACELIFT, despite running its first photographic bare-breasted woman, despite becoming "An Illustrated Monthly," and despite its occasional more popular than technical journalistic reporting, the *National Geographic Magazine* was still being edited by committee, and its circulation remained disappointingly low.

Gardiner Greene Hubbard died in 1897, and his son-in-law Alexander Graham Bell was, as Bell would later recount, "forced to become president of the [National Geographic Society] in order to save it." Bell, after considerable persuasion, accepted the presidency in January 1898.

Alexander Graham Bell was a stout, fifty-one-year-old, bearded bear of a man, a daring, innovative, somewhat disorganized, eccentric genius with a childlike enthusiasm for and fascination with the world around him. It was through his work with the deaf that Bell, then twenty-five years old, had met Gardiner Greene Hubbard in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1872. Hubbard's then-fifteen-year-old daughter, Mabel, had been totally deaf from a severe attack of scarlet fever ten years before. Hubbard had sought Bell's advice on improving her speech. Bell became Mabel Hubbard's teacher, they fell in love, and five years later—only after Bell felt he had proved himself through his invention of the telephone—they married.

During the first year of Bell's presidency of the National Geographic Society, he seems to have been too absorbed in his experimental work on flying machines to give the magazine much time or thought. And by Bell's first anniversary as president, membership had increased only from 1,140 to 1,400; a dismayed Board was faced with the Society's \$2,000 debt; and the magazine was on the brink of bankruptcy.

Bell was not discouraged. He approached the Board and outlined his plan. In effect he told them, "Geography is a fascinating subject, and it can be made interesting. Let's hire a promising young man to put some life into the magazine and promote membership. I will pay his salary. Secondly, let's abandon our unsuccessful campaign to increase circulation by newsstand sales. Our journals should go to *members*, people who believe in our work and want to help." Bell recognized that the



lure was not the magazine, but *membership* in a society that made it possible, as Ishbel Ross would later write, for “the janitor, plumber, and loneliest lighthouse keeper [to] share with kings and scientists the fun of sending an expedition to Peru or an explorer to the South Pole.”

BELL'S FIRST STEP was to search out a full-time editor, someone who would devote his entire time to the editorial work required by the magazine and the promotion of Society membership. Up to now these duties had been carried out by a committee of distinguished men who performed their work without pay. As Bell was to write later, “But in starting out to make a magazine that would support the Society, instead of the Society being burdened with the magazine, a man was of the first necessity; if we did not get the right man the whole plan would be a failure. . . .”

He already had a young man in mind.

Among the noted scholars and scientists invited to lecture before the Society in 1897 was the distinguished historian Professor Edwin A. Grosvenor, who, before accepting his appointment at Amherst College, had been a professor of history at Robert College in Constantinople for twenty-three years. While a guest in the Bells' Washington home, Professor Grosvenor had spoken glowingly of his identical twin sons, Gilbert and Edwin. The Bells' attractive teen-age daughter Elsie had listened with interest, and when later that spring Mrs. Grosvenor invited Elsie and her sister, Daisy, to attend the twins' graduation from Amherst, the girls accepted.

That summer Elsie, who had no difficulty telling the

Gardiner Greene Hubbard (shown here with his wife Gertrude at their Washington, D.C., summer home) served as the first president of the National Geographic Society. Although “not a scientific man” or a geographer, Hubbard had a deep interest in both disciplines. “By my election,” he declared, “you notify the public that the membership of our Society will not be confined to professional geographers, but will include that large number who, like myself, desire to promote special researches by others, and to diffuse the knowledge so gained, among men, so that we may all know more of the world upon which we live.”

twins apart, found herself attracted to Gilbert. Aware that her father was searching for a “promising young man,” she reminded him about the twin sons of his friend Professor Grosvenor. Perhaps one of them might be interested in working in Washington?

“Dr. Bell, who greatly admired my father, embraced the idea as his own,” Gilbert H. Grosvenor later wrote. “Soon he was at his desk, writing to his friend. Would either of the twins, Edwin and Gilbert, be interested in a job that might be a ‘steppingstone to something better?’”

Bell then sent a brief personal note to each of the twins along with a copy of the letter he had written their father. Bell's offer appealed strongly to young Gilbert Grosvenor who, from early childhood, had been interested in editing and writing, and had helped with the proofs and layout of his father's erudite two-volume 1895 *Constantinople*, according to Grosvenor, the first



scholarly work to be profusely illustrated with photographs. Authors and editors were common visitors in the Grosvenor household, and young Bert eagerly took part in their literary discussions.

At that time, Gilbert Grosvenor was studying for his master of arts degree and was in his second year of teaching at the Englewood Academy for Boys in New Jersey. Hired as an instructor in French, German, Latin, college algebra, chemistry, public speaking, and debating, Grosvenor would later recall, "Compared with this program, a job as editor seemed very easy."

He wrote Bell that the editing job did interest him and was invited to a meeting at Bell's home. Present also were the inventor's wife and his daughter Elsie.

Bell showed Gilbert copies of some of the leading magazines of that period—*Harper's Weekly*, *McClure's*, *Munsey's*, *The Century*, among others—and asked Grosvenor, "Can you create a geographic magazine as popular as these, one that will support the Society instead of the Society being burdened with the magazine?"

"Yes, I believe I can," Grosvenor replied, "but I must proceed slowly and feel my way."

Aware that Bell expected quick results, Grosvenor found he had to emphasize repeatedly that the magazine would have to go through a period of evolution; and because of the magnitude of the task, Bell should not expect it to become a success overnight.

Bell accepted Grosvenor's cautions and then proposed something that immediately made Grosvenor wary: Some years earlier, Bell and Gardiner Hubbard had spent \$87,000 in a vain attempt to establish a maga-

Following Gardiner Hubbard's death in 1897, his son-in-law Alexander Graham Bell agreed to become the second president of the National Geographic Society. To bolster the Society's faltering magazine, Bell brought in young Gilbert H. Grosvenor as assistant editor—a job "that might be a steppingstone to something better." Within the next few years Grosvenor became the driving force behind the Society and magazine—and also married Bell's daughter Elsie. Here, with his children at his side and his father-in-law looking on, Grosvenor diligently edits the National Geographic Magazine during a vacation at Bell's estate near Baddeck, Nova Scotia.

zine called *Science*, which had failed after two unprofitable years. Bell told the young man he was willing to back the *National Geographic Magazine* with funds equal to those poured into *Science*.

Much to the relief of Mrs. Bell, who was not in the least happy at the thought of her husband losing a vast sum in a magazine again, Grosvenor firmly told Dr. Bell he would accept the job only if the inventor limited his gift to a \$100 month salary—a figure even less than Grosvenor had been earning as a teacher.

"I knew that sheer weight of money would not accomplish what he wanted," Grosvenor would later write of that fateful meeting with Bell. "I also realized that, despite Dr. Bell's good will, a youth of twenty-three was not prepared to administer so large a sum. Older men, men unwilling to experiment, inevitably would push me aside, and I would have little opportunity to create and

to try new ideas. Yet, without imagination and a new approach, there could be no hope for the magazine."

Bell reluctantly accepted Grosvenor's conditions, and the meeting was concluded. In the brief moment that Elsie was alone with Gilbert by the door before he departed, she whispered, "I told Papa you had the talent he sought and would like to come to Washington!"

ON APRIL FOOL'S DAY, 1899, Bell brought Gilbert H. Grosvenor to the Society's headquarters opposite the United States Treasury building. The "headquarters," Grosvenor later wrote, was but "half of one small room (the other half occupied by the American Forestry Association), two rickety chairs, a small table, a litter of papers and ledgers, and six enormous boxes crammed with *Geographics* returned by the newsstands."

Bell looked about the room. "No desk!" he exclaimed. "I'll send you mine."

That afternoon deliverymen brought Grosvenor a handsome rolltop desk made of Circassian walnut. When he sat down before it, Grosvenor was looking at the only visible property of the National Geographic Society. The treasury was not just empty; the Society was nearly \$2,000 in debt.

Poor in funds though the Society may have been, it was extraordinarily rich for its most recently acquired asset: Gilbert Hovey Grosvenor, its first full-time employee. However, it was not, as Bell's letter had proposed, with the title of managing editor, but as assistant editor that Grosvenor was hired—and only for three months with the understanding that a more permanent engagement would be made at the end of that time if the appointment was satisfactory to the Society's editorial committee.

John Hyde was editor of the magazine. And although Hyde was employed as statistician to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, he clearly had considerably more influence over the selection of the materials and editing of the magazine than subsequent Grosvenor-edited *Geographic* histories would have one believe.

During the first few days at the *Geographic*, Bell took pains to introduce Grosvenor to his distinguished colleagues of the Society, all men considerably older than the twenty-three-year-old former boys' school teacher. Then Bell left for his summer home and laboratory at Baddeck, Nova Scotia. Bell's family, Elsie included, soon followed.

GROSVENOR'S FIRST ASSIGNMENT was to prepare an index of the previous *National Geographic Magazines*, but the major task confronting him as he settled into his new job was to find the means to revive the Society's depressed membership (and with it the Society's bank account). From the beginning, Grosvenor had enthusiastically endorsed Bell's doctrine of membership-subscription: the lure of joining was not just receiving a subscription to a magazine, but in becoming a *member* of a geographic society whose func-

tions were the "increase and diffusion of geographical knowledge" through its flagship publication the *National Geographic Magazine*, its monographs, bulletins, afternoon and evening lectures, and courses.

Grosvenor began by asking prominent men to nominate their friends for membership. "Initially that meant seeking nominations from my father and Dr. Bell," Grosvenor later wrote, "and my letters reveal that I badgered them unceasingly, unmercifully."

He was no less persistent with the officers and board members of the Society; and they, too—once their initial misgivings about direct-mail soliciting were appeased—responded generously. As soon as a nomination was received, the Admissions Committee would approve it and Grosvenor would write a personal letter to each new nominee inviting him or her to join. He made certain, however, that the letter was on engraved, embossed bond paper. "People don't pay any attention to cheaply written letters," he later said. "I had already decided we should have the finest stationery when we wrote to people inviting them to join the Society."

Grosvenor's personal letter to each new nominee would begin, "I have the honor to inform you that you have been recommended for membership. . . ."

Such an opening may have had a somewhat pompous ring to it, but it was effective. Membership created a bond with other "educated men" who, like the late Gardiner Hubbard, desired only "to promote special researches by others, and to diffuse the knowledge so gained, among men, so that we may all know more of the world upon which we live."

Scores of such letters went out each week, and Grosvenor's campaign quickly began to gain new members for the Society. "You see," Grosvenor wrote his father at about this time, "we want to make [much of] the fact of an election to the National Geographic Society so that people will think that they are complimented by nomination."

So appreciative was the Society of Grosvenor's efforts that even before his first month on the job had ended, Bell had written: "I am happy to inform you . . . that the Editorial Committee have been so much pleased with you that they consider it unnecessary to wait for the expiration of the three months before making a more permanent engagement with you . . . and I now have the great pleasure in confirming your appointment as Assistant Editor of the Magazine, for one year instead of three months, dating from the first of April, 1899, your salary to be one hundred dollars per month. . . ."

"I have written to Mr. Hyde suggesting that your name should appear in the June issue of the Magazine as Assistant Editor under his."

The following day Grosvenor received a note from Bell's personal secretary saying that Bell had wanted Grosvenor to know that the "Editorial Committee passed a resolution giving you great scope in the matter of securing Corresponding Members and pushing The Magazine—therefore go ahead and do what you think

The first issue of the National Geographic Magazine, published in October 1888 and sent to 165 members, had a simple terra-cotta-colored cover (right). In January 1896 the erratically issued magazine became a monthly, and a globe with latitudinal and longitudinal lines appeared as part of the cover design (bottom).

best in that direction, and if any question arises regarding expense in getting out circulars, etc., remember you have Mr. Bell behind you. The point is to materially increase the corresponding membership."

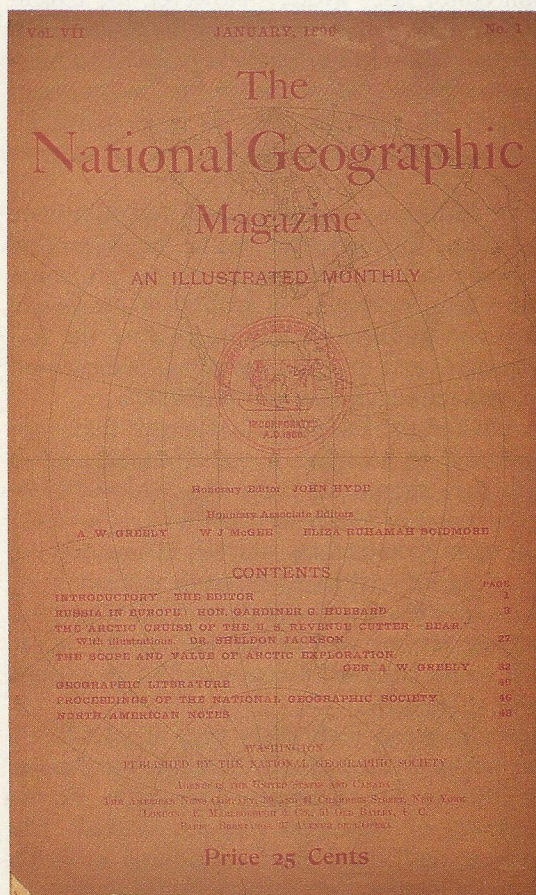
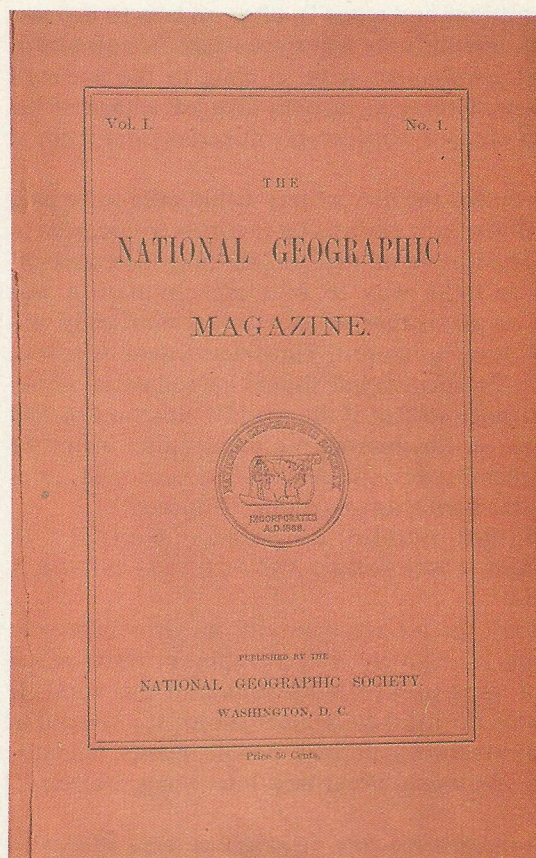
As a sales device, as a means of achieving subscription renewal, and the establishment of a permanent pool of subscribers, the concept of membership in a society whose magazine was but a tangible bonus was an inspired marketing device. It would remain so, however, only as long as the magazine itself remained interesting. To attract readers, Grosvenor would have to change the public's attitude toward geography, which he knew was regarded as "one of the dullest of all subjects, something to inflict upon schoolboys and avoid in later life." The Society's key to success, a popular approach to geography, was missing.

He began by studying other geographic journals then being published by geographic societies throughout the world. He next turned to those books in which geography played an important part, books that endured like Charles Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*, Richard Henry Dana, Jr.'s *Two Years Before the Mast*, Joshua Slocum's *Sailing Alone Around the World*, and Herodotus's travels, written two thousand years earlier. What was there in Herodotus's *History*, Grosvenor wrote, "that gave the book such life that it had survived 20 centuries and was still going strong?" What did those geographic books to which readers turned again and again have in common?

The answer, Grosvenor became convinced, was that "each was an accurate, eyewitness, firsthand account. Each contained simple, straightforward writing—writing that sought to make pictures in the reader's mind."

AS HIS FIRST SUMMER as assistant editor drew to a close, Grosvenor managed to increase both the number of pages in the magazine and its print order; but he continued to have to subordinate his tastes to those of editor John Hyde and to the magazine's twelve, unpaid associate editors. Many of them continued to want to insert technical, unintelligible-to-the-layman articles into the magazine; and it was often difficult for Grosvenor to edit or simplify such material without giving offense.

Grosvenor's ally, Bell, was away and not always aware, the young editor felt, of the stresses Grosvenor was under, nor appreciative of his problems. Nevertheless, all that summer Bell was sending Grosvenor letters of advice (the magazine should have a "multitude of



good illustrations and maps”), ideas on how to increase circulation, and the note that since scientific agencies of the federal government were so close to the Society’s headquarters, Grosvenor should take advantage of being able to pick up considerable material from them at no cost.

Bell wrote that the best writers would need to be paid well, and that meant advertising revenues would need to increase. The way to do that was through increased circulation, and the way to increase circulation was through a magazine that was not only scientifically reliable but of popular interest. Timeliness would help, too, Bell added. The *Geographic* should have material stockpiled in advance so that if the world’s attention shifted to a new place, the appropriate information would be available. The Society could also, Bell suggested, publish “popular books on geographic subjects.”

What did Bell consider “geographic subjects”?

Bell replied, “THE WORLD AND ALL THAT IS IN IT is our theme.”

Bell did not receive any quarrel from Grosvenor who would write, “I thought of geography in terms of its Greek root: *geographia*—a description of the world. It thus becomes the most catholic of subjects, universal in appeal, and embracing nations, people, plants, animals, birds, fish. We would never lack interesting subjects.”

UNDER GROSVENOR, the magazine entered 1900 with rising prospects—“or so Dr. Bell and I thought,” the assistant editor later wrote. “However, the Executive Committee, a five-man minority of the Board but a determined one, believed our plans hopelessly optimistic. These men wanted to stop ‘undignified’ membership promotion and sell the magazine on newsstands, although that approach previously had led to a debt-ridden Society.”

Among the various prominent editors and publishers whose suggestions for improving the financial position of the magazine Bell had sought, the most influential was S.S. McClure, publisher of *McClure’s Magazine*, which had begun publication four years after the *National Geographic* and in seven years had achieved an attention-commanding circulation of 370,000.

McClure advised the Executive Committee that since it was impossible to establish a popular magazine in Washington, they should: 1) move the *National Geographic* to the center of magazine publishing, New York; 2) change its name to something simpler; 3) abandon the idea of attracting subscribers by offering memberships; 4) beef up its advertisements and depend on newsstand sales to increase revenue and circulation; and, 5) never mention the name National Geographic Society, since people abhor geography.

Grosvenor disagreed with every one of McClure’s suggestions, but to his deep dismay McClure’s argument powerfully influenced the Executive Committee. Fortunately the Board of Managers was not swayed. The board members reaffirmed their confidence in Bell’s and Grosvenor’s membership-subscription concept.

It was about this same time that Grosvenor was called to Bell’s home. The inventor, obviously upset, asked the young editor, “What trouble have you been getting into?”

“Trouble?” Grosvenor asked. He couldn’t think of any.

Bell sat frowning and then he said, “The Chairman of the Executive Committee has asked for an interview to talk about some serious matters connected with the conduct of Mr. Grosvenor.”

Later that afternoon Bell summoned Grosvenor again. Seeing the young editor’s trepidation, Bell roared with laughter. He was a large man, weighing at least 250 pounds, and his laughter was as big as his frame. “The Executive Committee thought the Chairman should tell the President that Mr. Grosvenor was paying more attention to his daughter than to the *National Geographic Magazine!*”

The Bells did not object to Grosvenor’s courtship of Elsie, though Mrs. Bell seemed somewhat puzzled by the form it took. She was disturbed by how Grosvenor could be “so perfectly self-possessed when his lady-love is near him. I am sure you weren’t,” she told her husband. Mabel Bell decided that that was probably just the way Bert Grosvenor was. Besides, Elsie not only did not seem upset by her suitor’s *sangfroid*, she apparently copied it: “Elsie says she thinks she will probably decide to marry Gilbert,” Mabel Bell wrote to her husband the month the McClure proposal discussions were taking place, “but she is so perfectly matter-of-fact about it that I am sure she is not a particle in love with him.”

Despite her reservations, Mabel Bell had purchased a new trunk for her daughter and had it monogrammed E.M.G. instead of E.M.B. When Elsie had shyly asked her mother why, Mrs. Bell had replied, “I think for the next journey you make these initials will be right for you.”

When Elsie told young Bert, his heart leapt.

THE BELLS sailed for Europe on June 30, 1900; immediately thereafter, Gilbert Grosvenor’s difficulties with John Hyde and the Executive Committee escalated.

Just prior to Bell’s departure Hyde had written: “My dear Mr. Bell: At a meeting of the Executive Committee this afternoon, I reported your exceedingly generous offer to continue your contribution toward Mr. Grosvenor’s salary for another year and also your expression of opinion that the Society would be in danger of losing Mr. Grosvenor’s services unless it should make some addition to the salary he is now receiving. That brought on a consideration of the entire question of the assistant editorship with a special reference to the arrangement with the McClure Company, nearly all the details of which have been agreed upon, subject, of course, to ratification by the Board. In view of the large possibilities opening up in connection with this agreement and of other circumstances, the Committee are of the opinion that it would be unwise for the Board to take any action



that might seem to commit to Mr. Grosvenor [author's italics], either when your generous contribution should cease to be available or when the increasing importance of the magazine should make larger demands upon its editorial management. . . . With great respect, I am, my dear Mr. Bell, Very faithfully yours, John Hyde"

Three weeks before Bell left, Grosvenor had written to his father: "My position for this year, with regard to the Magazine, naturally came up to be settled, and I found that one or two men . . . wanted to turn me out, or at least make things very unpleasant for me. I can't help feeling that Mr. Hyde wants to retain the editorship after all, and thought that if he could get someone else in my place, he would be sure to stay in. I do not like to suspect him, but when he tells Mr. Bell he loves me like a son, and with the same breath that I am lacking in business ability and weak in proof-reading and hence do not deserve any increase in salary (not in these words, but to that effect), it is funny to say the least. . . . My position was referred to the Executive Committee, by the Board, with the unanimous recommendation that I receive a good promotion. The Executive Committee is comprised of [Henry] Gannett, [John] Hyde and [Alfred J.] Henry, and I shall hear from them today what they propose. . . ."

Six weeks later, on July 27, 1900, the Executive Committee offered Grosvenor his same job; he was given neither a promotion nor a raise.

Grosvenor's father, aware of the young editor's continuing problems with Gannett and Hyde, was counseling his son that troublesome summer in Washington, "Just be patient, be patient." But Grosvenor wrote his

"I've got her at last and she won't get away," Gilbert H. Grosvenor exulted when Elsie May Bell consented to marry him. They were wed in London on October 23, 1900. But the honeymoon of the Geographic's assistant editor and Alexander Graham Bell's daughter was soon interrupted by problems with the Society's determined Board of Managers.

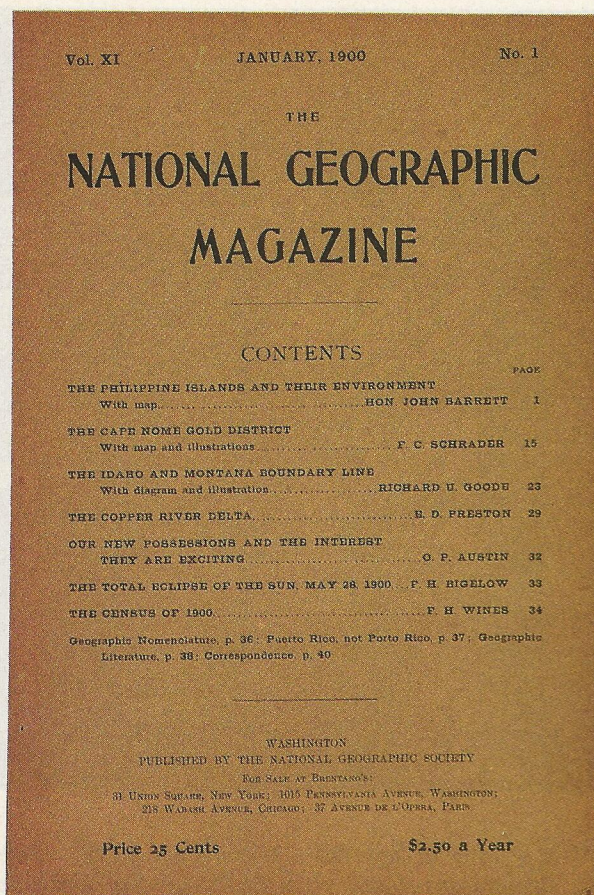
father that he would resign in the fall if the ideas of the Executive Committee and McClure prevailed.

Grosvenor had not wanted to bother Bell with his difficulties, but on August 6, 1900, knowing the inventor was preparing to return to Washington, he wrote that the battle with the Executive Committee was Bell's, too, and that soon he would have to face it again. "Naturally I am very much distressed with the committee," Grosvenor wrote, "but as I firmly believe that they are working not against me personally . . . but against your plans for the Society and for their individual interests, I do not intend to get out of their way, as they plainly hint they want me to."

An unexpected dividend to the Executive Committee's opposition to the young editor was that in late August it angered Elsie Bell enough for her to write Grosvenor that she would be glad to marry him, if he had not changed his mind. By return mail Grosvenor assured Elsie that he had not.

Dr. Bell telegraphed his congratulations, and shortly thereafter Mrs. Bell wrote Gilbert Grosvenor's mother:

"Of course, Elsie would not have written to Gilbert as she did at this time without Mr. Bell's and my full ap-



In 1900 a third cover design for the National Geographic Magazine appeared (left). By this time circulation had risen to more than 2,200. Yet another cover was adopted in 1901 (bottom).

proval. We feel that Gilbert has proved his mettle in this summer's trials and deserves the reward Elsie wants to give him. . . . I doubt whether Elsie would have been as sure of her own mind if all her love and sympathy had not been aroused by her indignation at the attacks upon him. So perhaps after all, Mr. Hyde has unwittingly done Gilbert a great service, and his late troubles are a blessing in disguise."

UPON HIS RETURN to Washington in September, Bell called together a meeting of the scientists, professionals, explorers, and businessmen who comprised the Society's Board of Managers. The Executive Committee did not have the support of this distinguished group; and in a resolution passed by the Board of Managers on September 14, 1900, its members made a point of praising Grosvenor's work, unanimously reaffirmed his permanent status with the Society, named him managing editor, and increased his salary to \$2,000 a year—the additional \$800 to be paid by the Society beginning January 1, 1901.

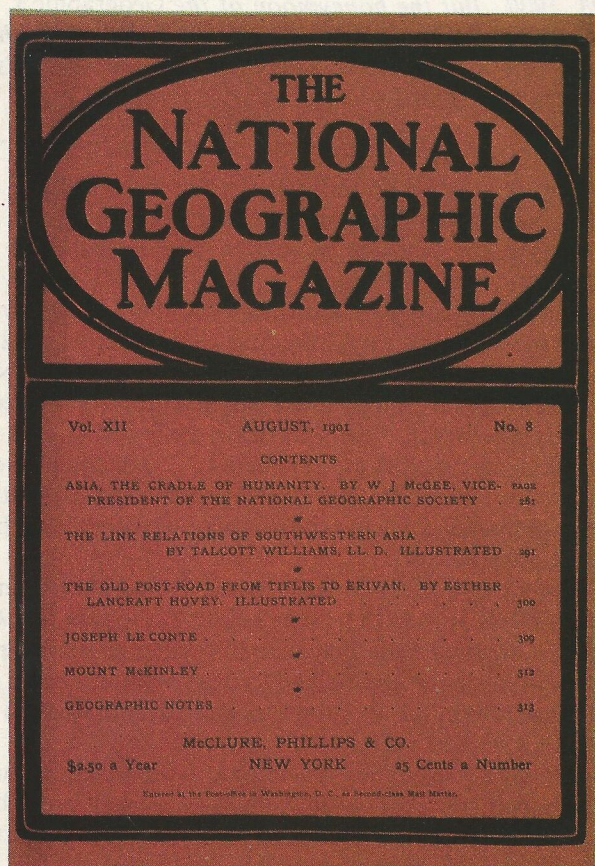
Hyde was given the title of editor-in-chief but remained without pay.

The following day Grosvenor wrote his father: "... the resolutions . . . are, I think, all one would wish. . . . Gannett and Hyde were thunderstruck and neither went to the meeting. . . . But as Henry said when recording [the resolution], 'they did it because of my work and because they believed in me and not because I was to be Mr. Bell's son-in-law.' And I am going to think that true or mostly true."

"I had interpreted the title Managing Editor as the controlling man in the organization," Grosvenor later said. "And from that time on, I was the chief executive of the office, being responsible for the Magazine, the makeup of the Magazine, and the responsibility of increasing the membership of the Society."

Convinced that the rift between himself and the Executive Committee had been mended, Gilbert joined Elsie in London. They were married on October 23, 1900, and immediately set out on a honeymoon tour of Europe. The young couple had reached Vienna, en route to Constantinople, when Grosvenor found himself worrying about the magazine. Instinct warned him that something was wrong. He and Elsie returned to Washington, arriving early in December 1900.

Something was indeed wrong: in Grosvenor's absence the Executive Committee had arranged to have the magazine printed not as it had been at Judd & Detweiler in Washington, but at McClure, Phillips & Company in New York. Evidently, Bell, who had gone abroad at the same time as the young Grosvenors but had returned before them, had participated in the lengthy discussions



A fifth cover design for the National Geographic, incorporating an "art nouveau" look, was introduced in 1904 (right).

The February 1910 issue (bottom) was the first to carry the distinctive acorn, oak, and laurel wreath design that (with periodic deletions of ornaments and the addition of graphics) has formed the basis for Geographic covers to this day. By 1910 Society membership, under the leadership of Gilbert H. Grosvenor, had grown to 74,018.

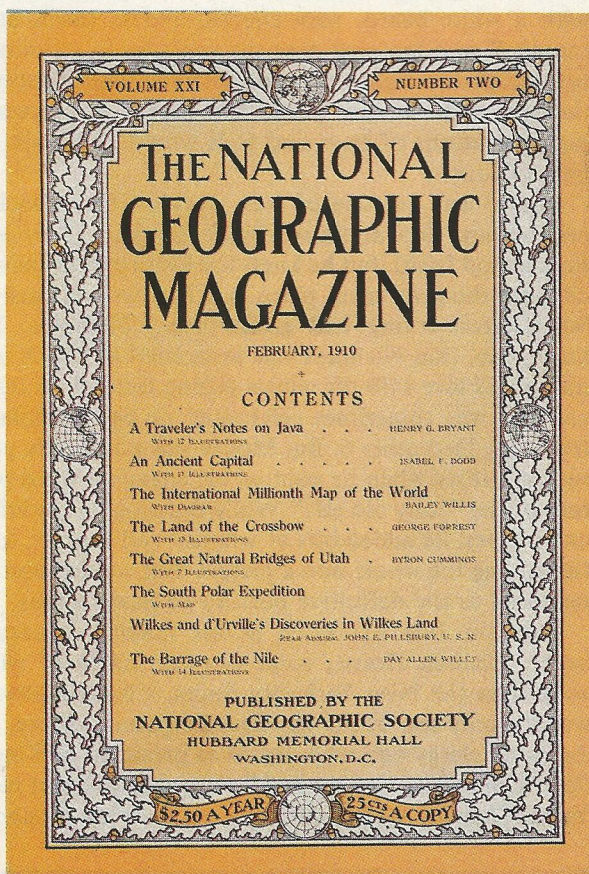
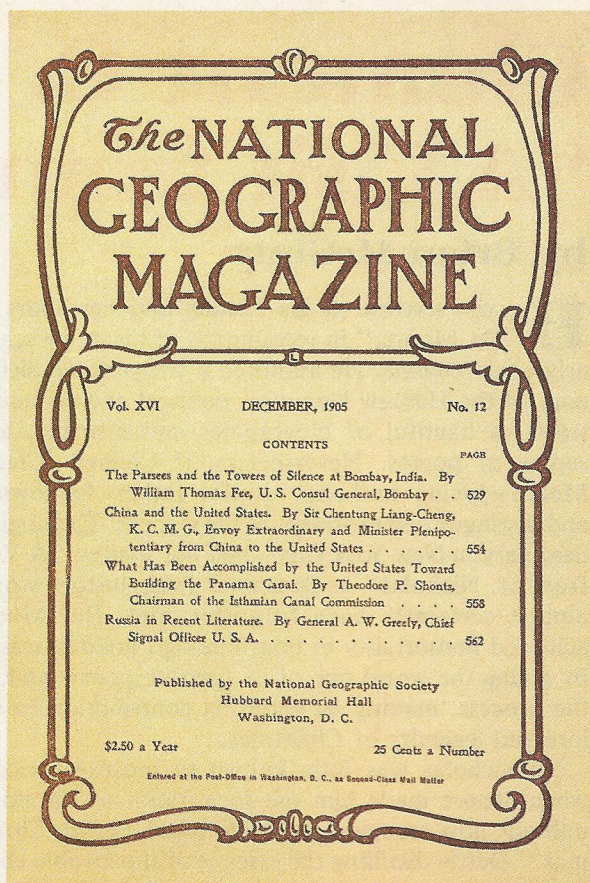
preceding the move and had opposed neither the negotiations nor the contract when it was signed. Grosvenor confronted Bell with the New York printing bill for the January 1901 issue, pointing out that not only was the charge twice as expensive as the previous Washington bill, but that McClure, Phillips had failed to acquire for the *Geographic* either new members, new advertising, or revenues. Bell responded, "Well, Bert, the Board made you the Managing Editor. You are responsible now."

As managing editor Grosvenor was responsible; furthermore, he had the authority to act. He immediately went to New York. However, both the January and February 1901 issues were printed there before he could reverse the Executive Committee's actions and return the printing to Washington. But return it he did and "knew," he later wrote, "I had saved something more important than dollars: [I had saved] Dr. Bell's original plan to enlist members who would help us create a great educational institution."

In what with hindsight can be seen as the pivotal point in the young magazine's history, Grosvenor had overturned the Executive Committee's decision, overruled his father-in-law's concurrence, and convinced the Board of Managers not only of the need to retain the Magazine's link with the Society through membership-subscription, but also to eventually disregard every one of McClure's suggestions. From that point on the National Geographic Society was run by Gilbert Hovey Grosvenor and not the other way around.

Grosvenor, offered the job less than two years earlier as "a steppingstone to something better," was to become the driving force behind the National Geographic Society for the next sixty-six years. Under his leadership the *Geographic* was transformed from an irregular, often dowdy technical journal with a circulation of a few hundred, into a glossy, color-packed popular publication with a circulation of over five million at the time of Grosvenor's death—large enough for one month's edition to make a stack twenty-five miles tall. ★

C.D.B. Bryan is the author of four novels and several nonfiction books, including The National Air and Space Museum and Friendly Fire, a highly-acclaimed work on the Vietnam war experience. He spent more than a year at the National Geographic Society headquarters in Washington, D.C., while writing The National Geographic Society: 100 Years of Adventure and Discovery, from which this article is excerpted.



Clement C. Moore: “A Visit from St. Nicholas”

by Brian McGinty

HE WAS KNOWN to his friends and neighbors as “Dr. Moore,” in recognition of his many scholarly achievements. He authored a two-volume dictionary of the Hebrew language, political and economic tracts, a handful of biographies and histories, and scores of poems. Nevertheless, if Clement Clarke Moore—loving husband, dutiful father, landowner, and distinguished professor at the General Theological Seminary in New York City—had not written “A Visit from St. Nicholas” in December 1822, history would almost certainly have forgotten him. But Moore achieved immortality in that long-ago holiday season by giving the world one of its favorite poems and, in the process, making an enduring contribution to the lore and legendry of Christmas.

St. Nicholas was little known to most Americans when Moore made him the focal point of the poem millions now recognize as “The Night Before Christmas.” Deftly distilling the essence of the lovable character who was soon to become the personification of Christmas giving, Moore wrote of a “jolly old elf” with a white beard, rosy cheeks, and a “droll little mouth,” who traveled over the rooftops in a “miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer.” He fondly dubbed the hero of his holiday poem “St. Nick,” but succeeding generations of boys and girls would know him as Santa Claus.

Moore was not one of New York’s Knickerbocker aristocracy (his ancestors were English, Scottish, French and Irish), but he knew the history of his native city and the prominent place in it that writers such as Washington Irving had given to St. Nicholas. He knew, too, that Nicholas was associated in Dutch tradition and lore with the winter gifting festival—a festival that was sometimes celebrated on St. Nicholas’s feast day, December 6. But Moore was not simply parrotting history when he painted his engaging word picture of the “jolly old elf.” While drawing on tradition and history, he added bits of whimsy and fantasy, too, fashioning the whole into a picture that would soon be regarded as the definitive portrait of Santa Claus.

Born on July 15, 1779, at his family’s ancestral home, Chelsea House, some distance north of what were then the New York city limits, Clement Moore was the only son of the Rt. Rev. Benjamin Moore, an Anglican clergyman who served as president of King’s (later Columbia) College and Episcopal Bishop of New York. Clement was a studious youth who mastered

Biblical history and became proficient in a half-dozen languages, including Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, and Italian. He married Catherine Elizabeth Taylor in 1813 and, with her, raised a large and happy family (of the nine children born to the Moores, seven survived to adulthood). Skillfully managing his family properties, Moore became one of the richest men in New York City—and one of its major benefactors, as well.

But family and business concerns were only part of Moore’s busy life. He was a member and secretary of the board of trustees of Columbia College. A talented musician, he was a lifelong student of opera and for many years the organist of his parish church. In his capacity as Professor of Oriental and Greek Literature at the General Theological Seminary, he was one of New York’s best-known and most respected teachers. Most important, perhaps, Moore was a dedicated and indefatigable scholar, who delighted in researching obscure and arcane bits of history, literature, and language, and writing about them in prose and verse. He was just short of his eighty-fourth birthday when, on July 10, 1863, after a life rich in achievements and honors, he died at his summer home in Newport, Rhode Island.

Though Moore’s poetry was admired during his lifetime, none of his other verse equaled the success of the classic Christmas poem he allowed to be published (anonymously) in 1823. “A Visit from St. Nicholas” was written during the Christmas season of 1822 and read by the author to his children on Christmas Eve that year. It was such an attractive verse that a relative who heard it made a copy of the manuscript and, the following year, sent it to a newspaper in upstate New York. It was on December 23, 1823, in the *Troy Sentinel*, that “A Visit from St. Nicholas” was first published.

“We do not know,” the *Sentinel*’s editor told his readers, “to whom we are indebted for the following description of that unwearied patron of music—that homely and delightful personage of parental kindness—Santa Claus—his costume, and his equipage, as he goes about visiting the firesides of this happy land, laden with Christmas bounties—but from whomsoever it may have come, we give thanks for it.”

A clue to the author’s identity was offered when the poem was reprinted on January 1, 1829, in the *New York Morning Courier*. That paper’s editor described the poet as “a gentleman of more merit as a scholar



and writer than many of more noisy pretensions.” Moore did not publicly acknowledge authorship of “A Visit from St. Nicholas” until 1837, when it appeared with three of his other poems in *The New-York Book of Poetry*. Within a few years, it made its way into school readers and holiday anthologies and became a favorite of school children (and adults) all over the country.

The controversy that later grew about the poem’s authorship was largely attributable to the fact that, when it was first published, no credit was given to Moore. So pretty (and, in the beginning, so mysterious) a poetic gem was almost certain to inspire spurious claims of authorship. Probably the most persistent suggestion that someone other than Moore wrote “A Visit from St. Nicholas” was made a while after Moore’s death by descendants of Henry Livingston, Jr., a New-York-born amateur poet and local government official. Livingston’s grandchildren claimed that their ancestor had once possessed a manuscript of “A Visit from St. Nicholas” and that it was complete with corrections written in his own hand. But the manuscript was never found, and Livingston’s heirs were unable to produce any tangible evidence that he himself had ever claimed to be the poem’s author.

A manuscript in the collections of the New York Historical Society is better evidence of Moore’s authorship. It is a copy of “A Visit from St. Nicholas” in Dr. Moore’s own hand, dated March 13, 1862—nearly forty years after the poem was composed—but bearing the still-strong signature of “Clement C. Moore” and the notation, “originally written many years ago.”

It has been a century since Moore last walked the streets of New York City (the site of his Chelsea House is now the Chelsea district on the west side of Manhattan Island), but the poet is still remembered there. Each Christmas, carols are sung at his grave in Trinity Church Cemetery on upper Broadway as boys and girls (and men and women, too) gather to recite the classic poem he gave them all so long ago.

“Happy Christmas to all,” Moore wrote in the poem’s concluding line. And so his admirers repeat the line to this day: “Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night.” ★

Brian McGinty is a regular contributor to American History Illustrated. For further reading, he recommends The Poet of Christmas Eve: A Life of Clement Clarke Moore by Samuel White Patterson (1956).



Even after half a century, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" continues to enchant moviegoers by the millions. It is a story of magic, told by magicians.

Disney's Enduring Masterpiece

by Edward Oxford

KLIEG LIGHTS. Limousines. Reporters. And, on the marquee of the Carthay Circle Theater in Hollywood—back on that crisp evening of December 21, 1937—the lights spell out the title of a new motion picture: Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

More than ten thousand fans are on hand. One hundred and fifty policemen. An orchestra of forty.

Star-watchers glimpse illustrious first-nighters—tuxedoed, silver-foxed—as they stride up the red carpet leading into the movie palace. Charlie Chaplin. Judy Garland.

John Barrymore. Marlene Deitrich. Gary Cooper. Katherine Hepburn. Cary Grant. Mary Pickford. Charles Laughton. Ginger Rogers. Shirley Temple. The royalty of Tinseltown, come to see the first public appearance of quite a special princess. And, not least among them, a slim, shy-eyed, dark-mustached dreamer by the name of Walt Disney, accompanied by his wife, Lillian.

At 8:45 P.M., the lights in the theater dim. The curtain rises. And the lilting "One Song" fills the vast darkness. . . .

The night would be—for Snow White, for her prince, for the dwarfs, even for the wicked witch, and most certainly for their creator and his many helpers—a cine-



matic triumph. A night when a hard-eyed Hollywood audience would cheer, scene after scene. A night in which a motion picture legend would be born.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, as the 1,500 viewers at its premiere were quick to perceive, turned out to be much more than a movie. Its 250,000 drawings, its timeless story, its golden music all somehow equated to splendid fantasy. To love. To the remembered joy of being alive.

The picture, in what seemed a twinkling, won worldwide acclaim. Reviewers—even the most steel-

hearted—were reduced to paeans of praise: "... perfectly delightful screen entertainment." "... there has never been anything in the theater quite like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*." "... exquisite imagery, delicate charm, breathtaking beauty." "... It has excitement, drama, wit, artistry, and a most potent magic." "... an inspired and inspiring work." "Seeing it once is not enough. . . ."

And they meant it.

Walter Elias Disney, just turned thirty-six, did not have simply a hit on his hands. He had a box-office bonanza. Theater managers clamored for prints of the film. A week after the opening, *Time* magazine put Disney and dwarfs on its cover. The film was sound-tracked



in French, Danish, Spanish, Czechoslovakian, German, Portuguese, Polish, Italian, and Dutch. Letters of praise poured into the studio; one read: "Before I saw *Snow White* I was fifty-three years old. After I saw it I was fifty-three years young."

In three months, twenty million people flocked to see *Snow White*. During its first release, the film grossed a then-astounding \$8.5 million. Artifacts of *Snow White* and the Dwarfs—fashioned in every substance from clay to platinum, in every shape from tea sets to sweat shirts—sold for additional millions. Cartier's offered bracelets with eight appropriate charms—for \$100. In Brooklyn, New York, a Miss Frances Snowwhite, whose number was listed in the phone book, never wanted to hear from another "dwarf" again. Wrote columnist Ernie Pyle of *Snow White*: "... the public is agggggg!"

THE CARTHAY CIRCLE THEATER, this half-century later, is gone. So are Chaplin, Garland, Cooper, Barrymore, Laughton, Grant, Pickford, and nearly all the movie greats of that far-away, long-ago golden age. And so, for that matter, is Walt Disney.

But *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* lives on. The motion picture was more than three years in the making, an hour and twenty-three minutes in the showing, and a lifetime in the remembering. It is a story of magic—a story told by magicians.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awarded Walt Disney a special Oscar—a full-sized statuette accompanied by seven smaller ones—for Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The award was given by ten-year-old Shirley Temple (above), who stood on a chair during the presentation.

Walt Disney Studios re-released *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in mid-1987 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of its opening. Shown at four thousand theaters in sixty countries, including the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, the film, to no one's surprise, was yet again a smashing success. In *Variety*'s pithy parlance, *Snow White*, even in its eighth go-round, was a "megahit."

In the past fifty years the film has earned about \$375 million. In its latest release it brought in \$43 million, a re-issue record for any film. *Snow White* ranks as the top animated movie money maker of all time. It has been said that more people have seen *Snow White* than any other film in history.

But the real triumph achieved by *Snow White* has to do with the human heart. The film does not have a star's "name" billed on it. It does not have one flesh-and-blood actor or actress. It hasn't one real-life background or setting. It is dream become reality.



Plucked from the myths of the Brothers Grimm, the pictorial fable blends color and beauty, wit and charm in artistic proportions. It is an adventure rounded out with romance, pathos, menace, suspense, an exciting climax, and, best of all, a happy ending.

Snow White prevails because it unabashedly presents romance—"that soft clutch of the heart, that scherzo of joy, that ascent into illusion," as one reviewer rhapsodized—the theme that mesmerizes all.

THE QUEST for artistic fulfillment, along with the thought of profit, inspired Disney to make the world's first full-length animated feature. By the early 1930s the movie industry had bestowed upon him all types of honors for his successes with Mickey Mouse and the Silly Symphonies. But the eight-minute one-reelers—with Mickey, Minnie, Goofy, Donald Duck, Pluto, the Three Little Pigs, and their stellar like—were to him but precursors of grander visions.

The Depression, meanwhile, meant hard times at the box office. Those quarters paid by adults for admission, those dimes paid by children, were getting difficult to come by. To bring in more viewers, exhibitors began to run double features—two full-length films on one bill. Bookings for cartoons became tight.

Disney, following the lead of short-subject stars Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Harold Lloyd, saw the feature-length film as the form of the future. "If we put ten of these 700-foot shorts together, we've got us a feature—7,000 feet," Disney pointed out to his older brother, Roy, the business brain of Walt Disney Productions. "We'll get more for a full feature."

Roy was skeptical. So was Hollywood. There had never been a full-length cartoon. The professionals doubted that movie audiences would pay to see one. W.C. Fields, for one, thought that so much color might hurt a viewer's eyes.

There was, however, no stopping the determined Disney. Brother Roy—and even Walt's own wife—tried to persuade him to stick with the tried-and-true one-reelers. But Walt Disney had come to Hollywood with forty dollars and a dream. He was not about to disregard the call to glory.

From out of his boyhood years in the Midwest Disney summoned up memories of the folk tales his grandmother had read to him. And he recalled a time back in Kansas City when, as a fourteen-year-old newsboy, he had seen the one-hour silent film version of *Snow White*. The more he pondered the beloved, durable tale, the more he saw the story as a "natural" for full-scale animation.

It had a beautiful princess and a handsome prince; it had love, a villainous queen, dwarfs, forests and animals, and, best of all, it had a basic story that touched the spirit.

One evening early in 1934, Disney gave his thirty or so artists fifty cents apiece to have dinner at the cafe across from his hodgepodge of a studio on Hyperion Avenue. When they returned, he summoned the artists to the deserted sound stage, sat them in a semicircle, and there, from eight o'clock until midnight—acting, mugging, eyebrow-wiggling—he told them the story of *Snow White*. He conjured out of air the characters they were to translate into film. *Snow White*, he announced, would be their first full-length venture.

One of the artists, Ken Anderson, recalls, "It was a shock because we knew how hard it was to do a cartoon short. Disney was doing something no other studio had ever attempted. But he thrilled us. We wanted to do it just as he had told it to us."

From the time Disney first set forth his idea for *Snow White* to the time the film was completed more than three years later, his studio staff grew from about 150 to 750. These included 32 animators, 102 assistant animators, 107 in-betweeners (who filled in pieces of action between the animators' drawings), 20 layout men, 25 background artists, 65 special effects animators (who drew smoke, water, clouds, and other effects), and 158 inkers and painters who inscribed the drawings on celluloid sheets for reproduction.

Disney crowded apprentice animators into cramped offices, then broke through walls into adjoining cottages to make room for more of them. He enforced long hours and offered modest pay. He stressed quality by paying bonuses of four to twelve dollars per foot of film distinguished by particularly fine animation.



There were no time clocks. Disney set no daily minimum footage requirements. Animators could throw out a whole day's work product if they did not like it. Disney was everywhere, early and late, and encouraged employees to call him "Walt."

But he well knew, and his animators came to understand, that *Snow White* had to be both an artistic and a commercial success. He worked himself and his employees unsparingly.

EVERY CHARACTER in the feature had to be created from scratch. "We found they were pretty temperamental," Disney said. "It took our animators months to bend our new players to our wills. Each had to stand on their own merit, as perfect as we could make them."

A Disney outline described Snow White as a "fourteen-year-old Janet Gaynor" and the prince as an "eighteen-year-old Douglas Fairbanks, Jr." The deliciously malicious Queen would be "a mixture of Lady Macbeth and the Big Bad Wolf."

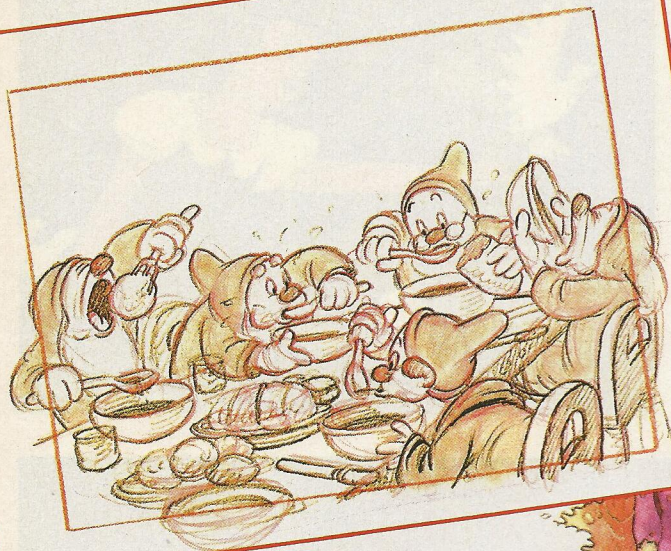
The gossamer-like princess—particularly in her voice and appearance—would have to be innocent, endearing, warm-hearted. Her character would make or break the

The quarter-million inked drawings used in Snow White were the end-result of hundreds of thousands of other conceptual and working sketches. An inspirational drawing, above, depicts the scene in which the wicked queen consults her magic mirror.

entire production. Disney searched for a perfect young woman for the part with much the same determination that David O. Selznick was to exert when he sought Scarlett O'Hara for *Gone With the Wind*. (See sidebar on page 38.)

The Brothers Grimm had provided scant delineation of the dwarfs in their original tale—which, from Disney's point of view, was all the better, for this freed him to create his own fantastical interpretations. Disney decided that each should have a name expressing a strong personality characteristic. An early outline listed fifty possible names for "the seven little men," as Disney called the dwarfs—including such monikers as Weepy, Dirty, Hungry, Wistful, Blabby, Snappy, and Dizzy.

In time, the immortal seven evolved in the minds—and on the sketch boards—of Disney's animators:



Sneezy, with his gargantuan ker-choos . . . bumbling Doc, the stuttering, self-appointed leader . . . misogynic Grumpy . . . the blushing Bashful . . . Sleepy, the narcoleptic . . . irrepressible Happy . . . and, he of the Harpo Marxian eloquence, lovable drudge Dopey . . . beguiling little creatures all, each an individual empathetic to the trials and joys of Snow White.

"We had to learn how to put personality into the characters," recalls Ollie Johnston, one of Disney's key animators. "Character was portrayed not only by look, name, and sound—but by temperament. What makes the film so special is the characterization. People care about the princess and the dwarfs because they sense real human traits in them."

And there would, of course, be a back-up cast of hundreds—the birds and creatures of the forest—portrayed in the grand, Disneyesque manner.

Disney's animators sought the illusion of life. They were called upon to do far more than make their figures smile or frown. They had to communicate emotions—love, dejection, hate, jealousy, fear. "Mere" drawings, in their lines and curves and swirls, were expected to make audiences laugh and cry. And they did.

Several planned or completed sequences for Snow White—including one depicting the seven dwarfs eating a meal (above left) and another showing them making a bed for the princess (above right)—were eliminated from the film during the final stages of production.

The artists turned out more than a million sketches and drawings for the movie, most of which wound up on the studio floor. Disney selected the best of the best for the final sequences, and made sure that every frame—twenty-four for each second of the film—counted.

Several major sequences were left uncompleted or, though finished, were cut with regret. Animator Ward Kimball worked on two of them—one in which the dwarfs build a bed for Snow White, another in which they eat soup. (See illustrations above.) "Walt was excited about them as sequences," he explains, "but in the end, the picture was running about fifteen minutes too long. So he cut them, and edited down other pieces here and there. He kept the film tight."

Endowed with a timeless story, romance and adventure, humor and suspense, captivating music, and masterful animation, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs—the most successful animated film ever made—has enchanted eight generations of audiences.



AT THE PEAK OF PRODUCTION, as many as five hundred animators and inkers were working on *Snow White* in assembly-line fashion. Artists would confer with Disney on the story line. Then they would draw, discard, and redraw until they captured the right character, mood, and action for the script. Other artists then traced finished drawings onto sheets of transparent celluloid with India and colored inks. Next, the celluloids were passed on to about 150 colorists—young women who applied color to them. Cameramen then positioned the “cels” over water-colored backgrounds and photographed them in Technicolor. Certain sequences, involving camera movement and multiple layers of cels, were photographed with a newly-designed, fourteen-foot-high “multiplane” camera that gave the scenes a realistic illusion of depth. Editors assembled the final “shots” of the picture into 7,200 feet of finished film.

Accomplished though his artists were already, Disney urged them toward ever-higher degrees of excellence. He set up a kind of master’s class at the studio to hone their skills. Animator Frank Thomas remembers: “Walt would bring in people like Frank Lloyd Wright to talk with us about the arts and the humanities. We would go to ballets, to films. Everybody was studying constantly.”

Disney held story conferences throughout the creation of the picture. A stenographer prepared transcripts. These became work sheets for the 110-page final “script.”

Disney strove for realistic flow and smooth movement. He insisted on more and more individual drawings—with no shortcuts or reprints. As production proceeded, the animators and inkers often worked late into the evenings and on weekends, and some slept over—



night on makeshift beds near their drawing tables. The artists found themselves caught up in Disney's quest for perfection. Whole sequences of Dopey, for example, were redrawn after an animator thought to put a humorous "hitch" in his step.

When Disney viewed some of the animation of the princess, her features seemed pale. A woman colorist suggested that a touch of red be added to her cheeks—on each "cel" painting of Snow White. When Disney wondered how the inkers would be able to place the color correctly on each painting, the women gently re-

Recommended additional reading: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* by Richard Hollis and Brian Sibley (Simon and Schuster, 1987); *Disney Animation* by Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston (Abbeville Press, 1981); and *Disney's World of Fantasy* by Adrian Bailey (Everest House, 1982).



minded him they did it in real life every day when putting on their rouge. So it was that Snow White got color—a bit of rose red—in her cheeks.

If there is a technical flaw in the film—and to search for one is to quibble—it may have to do with the seeming rigidity of the human figures, while the dwarfs and animals exhibit a full, vibrant range of mobility. The animators found it easier to make birds and beasts act as humans than to create humans who act as humans.

The artists brought to the film the influences of European illustrators such as Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac, and W. Heath Robinson. But mainly they brought their homegrown American talents and inventiveness. They made life happen in cartoon form. The term "cartoon," however, annoyed Disney whenever it was applied to *Snow White*. He once declared: "It is no more a cartoon than a Whistler painting is a cartoon."

“The Fairest One of All”

Adriana Caselotti, whose voice was that of Snow White in Disney's animated feature, still gets letters and calls from fans. A vibrant seventy-one, the coloratura soprano even now can hit the high notes of “Someday My Prince Will Come”—with trills to spare.

The slender songstress, then age nineteen, won out over 148 other hopefuls, including Deanna Durbin, for the chance to speak and sing the part of Princess Snow White.

Her delicate, crystal-like notes helped make Snow White a persona both magical and memorable.

“I’ve seen the picture more than forty times,” she says proudly. “And I know of someone who has seen it more than a hundred and seventy-five times.”

The film's casting director had called Guido Caselotti, a Los Angeles voice coach, in search of a singing student who sounded like a little girl. Daughter Adriana, listening on the extension, at once sang a high-voiced passage. The director asked her to report for an audition.

“I was the first one they auditioned,” she recalls. “My father sat at an old upright piano. Walt Disney listened from behind a screen. He didn’t want to view the



singer. He just wanted to know the voice. About a year later he told me I was Snow White.”

Adriana's work on the film started in 1935. Her voice had to be recorded before animation of the Princess could be begun. During the next two years she would show

up at the studio whenever she was needed to speak or sing.

“I was paid twenty dollars a day for every day I worked,” she says. “That figured out to \$980 for playing Snow White. But money wasn’t the thing. I was part of the greatest animation film ever made.”

Three times a widow, Adriana lives in a Hawaiian-style house about two miles from the spot where Snow White's star is embedded in Hollywood's “Walk of Fame.”

Adriana recalls poignantly that her mother could not afford to buy her the “beautiful, white” dress that she so wanted to wear to the film's opening. It cost three dollars. They settled for a black dress that cost two. Somehow no ticket was left for her at the box office that night; she had to sneak in to see the premiere. To enhance the aura of illusion, Disney had given no screen credits to those—Adriana among them—who played the characters' voices.

None of which matters all that much anymore. Adriana Caselotti explains: “Because of Snow White I live on a cloud. I’m still on it. I won’t ever come down. To me, there is only one Snow White. Me.” ★

MUSIC PLAYED its own unforgettable part in *Snow White*. There are eight songs in the film—among them the theme “Some Day My Prince Will Come,” “One Song,” “Heigh-Ho,” “Whistle While You Work,” “With a Smile and A Song,” and “I’m Wishing”—all for which Frank Churchill wrote the music and Larry Morey the lyrics. Eighty musicians rendered the score for the soundtrack. As beautifully suited to the story as they are to the splendid animation, the tunes have become perennial favorites.

Walt Disney would accept no compromise on his dream-work—in time, money, or talent. He was, as the baleful saying has it, “going for broke.” At one point *Snow White's* production costs had more than tripled Disney's original estimate when his feature reached the million-dollar mark—enough, in those days, to fashion a full-scale musical—and it still was not finished. Hollywood began to call the venture “Disney's Folly.”

Disney turned to the Bank of America for \$500,000 more to complete the picture. The bank had already advanced a sizeable amount for the film. It promptly dispatched a loan officer to the studio for a look at a

rough-cut, and Disney gave him a private screening. At that stage in production, however, the feature was still a thing of shreds and patches. To fill in missing sequences, a desperate Disney spoke missing lines of dialogue and sang snatches of songs, playing for two hours to an audience of one. After Disney's blood-sweat-and-tears effort, the banker uttered not a word. Disney, crestfallen, walked with him to the parking lot. As the banker got into his car, he said: “That thing is going to make you a hatful of money.”

Disney got his loan. And, within eight months after *Snow White's* opening, he had paid back every cent of it—and all of the other monies borrowed for the film's making.

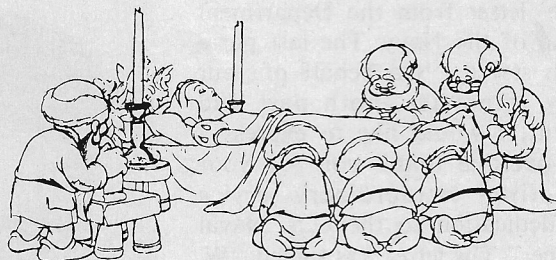
The rest—as Hollywood observers are wont to say—is history.

Some film reviewers consider *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* to be as significant cinematically as *The Birth of a Nation* or the introduction of sound to motion pictures. In it, Walt Disney perfected a new art of entertainment and explored a new creative field of screen endeavor.

“Snow White” Lore and Legend

Some behind-the-scene notes on Walt Disney's—and the world's—first full-length animated film:

- ★ Walt Disney contemplated filming *Alice in Wonderland*, with Mary Pickford as Alice's voice, as his first full-length animated effort. He later considered *Rip Van Winkle*, with Will Rogers. But he selected *Snow White* instead.
- ★ Animators were assigned to specific characters. They kept mirrors at their drawing tables so they could try out expressions as they drew.
- ★ Disney himself did no drawings as such for *Snow White*. Though he had a facile hand, he did not consider himself an artist. He was, rather, the creative organizer, director, and disciplinarian who shaped the idea into reality.
- ★ During the animating of the film, Disney would bring people in from the street to critique his artists' drawings.
- ★ Studio chemists mixed and tested 1,500 paint colors and shades to achieve the final hues for the film.
- ★ A great number of the original celluloid paintings for *Snow White* have deteriorated or gone astray. The Walt Disney Studios sold many others to museums and art collectors. One “cel” and its original background recently sold for \$30,000.
- ★ *Snow White* has never been shown in its entirety on television, nor has it been released on videocassettes.
- ★ Walt Disney was awarded an Oscar for *Snow White* in 1939—a special one, consisting of a full-size statuette and seven dwarf Oscars mounted in a stair-step arrangement. When Shirley Temple presented it to him, Disney said he was so proud he thought he would burst. The ten-year-old exclaimed: “Oh, don't do that, Mister Disney!”
- ★ Copies of the master-print for *Snow White* are stored in a salt mine in Utah.
- ★ Disney once said: “I do not make films primarily for children. I make them for the child in all of us, whether we be six or sixty. Call the child innocence. The worst of us is not without innocence.”
- ★ Walt Disney died in 1966. The studios he founded are currently at work on their twenty-seventh full-length animated feature. *Snow White* was their first and, for many a moviegoer, the most cherished and best remembered of them all. ★



British director Michael Powers put Disney's masterwork into this perspective: “At one stride, with this feature-length cartoon in color, for making which he had been ridiculed, Disney became one of the world's greatest film producers. In *Snow White*, Disney abolished naturalism, established stylistic settings, and backgrounds, controlled his design of color and sound, and held audiences enraptured all over the world.”

Of *Snow White*'s wonder-worker, a cartoon movie-maker said wryly: “We're businessmen. Walt Disney's an artist. With us, the idea is to hit 'em and run. Disney's more of a Rembrandt.”

Today, as animators at Walt Disney Studios work on the firm's twenty-seventh full-length animated feature, some of the younger artists still borrow *Snow White* sequences from the archives to study the techniques that Disney and his helpers fashioned half a century ago.

The *New York Times* motion picture critic Frank S. Nugent surrendered gracefully to the genial warmth of the fantasy back when it first appeared on the vast screen of the Radio City Music Hall. He wrote that “there is magic in the film, and hearts' ease, and tonic

for disillusion. Wars are being fought as the picture un-reels; crimes are being committed; hatreds are being whetted; riots are being brewed. But the world fades away when Mr. Disney begins weaving his spell, and enchantment takes hold. There is a roseate nimbus over Fifth Street these days; be careful or it will touch you too.”

Even now, perhaps even *more* now—as humankind nears the last decade of this tumultuous century—one touch of Disney's *Snow White* still makes the whole world kin.

One animator, Shamus Culhane, recalls wistfully of working on the film: “It gave you a funny feeling. You were still young and yet you knew that no matter how old you got, you had done a part of something that people were going to love long after you were gone.” ★

Freelance writer Edward Oxford works out of New York City. His stories of the sinking of the Titanic and the bombing of Hiroshima have previously appeared in American History Illustrated.

When Wake Atoll fell in December 1941, its defenders included civilian workers as well as Marines. For nearly forty years, the civilians would be “Veterans without Portfolio.”

Wake's Forgotten Survivors

by Reba Wilkerson

EARL WILKERSON reread his letter from the Department of the Navy. The last paragraph stated, “On behalf of your many shipmates, both past and present, I would like to express a long-overdue thank you for your patriotism, extraordinary service and dedication to the U.S. Naval Service.” The letter was signed “W. P. Behning, Captain, U.S. Navy.” In his hands, Wilkerson held three bronze medals with bright ribbons that had accompanied the letter: the World War II Victory Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and the American Campaign Medal.

“Long-overdue” was an understatement. The year was 1981—some four decades after the events for which Wilkerson was finally receiving official recognition as a war veteran. In 1941 he had been one of

over a thousand civilian workers building military facilities on remote Wake Island in the Pacific. During the opening weeks of World War II these men had helped 450 Marines defend the atoll against Japanese invaders. Many had given their lives on Wake, and others had perished later in captivity. Those who survived the war had endured forty-four months—from December 1941 to September 1945—as prisoners of war.

Combat and captivity were not what Wilkerson and his co-workers expected when, in the spring of 1941, they signed up to work for the Morrison Knudsen Construction Company of Boise, Idaho.



Earl Wilkerson, circa 1941.

Morrison Knudsen was one of eight companies in a consortium called Contractors Pacific Naval Air Bases (CPNAB). The group's purpose was to improve U.S. military defenses in the Pacific Islands: Hawaii, Samoa, the Philippines, and Midway, Wake, Guam, Johnston, Palmyra, and Caviti islands. Each firm was allotted an island; Morrison Knudsen was assigned to Wake.

The 1,150 civilian workers for Wake were transported to the atoll in successive groups of between two and three hundred men. Wilkerson's group sailed as far as Hawaii on the luxury liner *Matsonia*, of the famous Matson Lines. Morrison Knudsen reserved several Lanai Suites (first-class accommodations) on the ship and placed cots in each unit so that ten men could share the facilities.

After five uneventful days the men reached Honolulu, where they stayed for twenty-one hours before boarding a tanker for the final leg of the voyage. For four days the tanker plied its way across the calm Pacific toward the tiny outpost about 2,300 miles west of Hawaii.

The workers found their destination unimpressive—a four-mile-long, horseshoe-shaped atoll lining the rim of an ancient, nearly submerged volcano. No palm trees or tropical flowers greeted them: the bleak, nearly flat terrain (maximum elevation twenty-one feet) was covered with thick brush and ironwood. Thousands of rats, land



crabs, and seabirds inhabited the atoll. Except for rain-water, it had no natural water supply. The arriving crews also discovered that the name Wake Island was something of a misnomer, for the atoll was actually made up of three adjacent islets: Wake, Wilkes, and Peale. All three islands were closely ringed by a coral reef that enclosed a shallow lagoon.

The men of Wilkerson's group found that Marines and several hundred other civilian workers had preceded them to Wake. Construction of military facilities had begun in January 1941, and two camps with barracks had already been built for military and civilian personnel. There were also a hospital, mess hall, canteen, movie theater, machine shop, powerhouses, fresh-water distilleries, utility buildings, and warehouses for construction equipment and supplies. A Marine depot, naval air station, and additional barracks were being built, and ground was being leveled for two air strips.

The lagoon, being dredged for use by submarines, was already deep enough for seaplanes. Pan American Airways had been using Wake since 1936 as a refueling stop for its "China Clippers" on their trans-Pacific route between San Francisco and Manila. A small hotel on Peale Island served the seaplane passengers during their overnight layovers on the twice-weekly flights.

EACH CIVILIAN WORKER had signed on for a specific job. Wilkerson was to manage the canteen. There, above the counter, hung a large sign shaped like a wheel, marked with a prioritized schedule of tasks to be done. Near the wheel was a sign that read, "War is imminent . . . keep the wheel turning." The new arrivals were startled when they first read the sign, but Wilkerson and others decided not to leave, trusting that the U.S. Navy would be able to evacuate them if the situation became

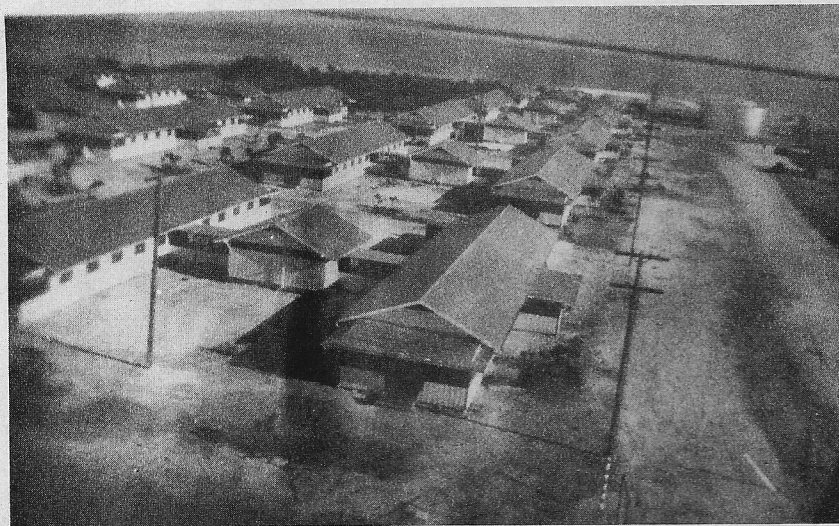
Under the guns and bayonets of Japanese soldiers (above), just-captured defenders of Wake Atoll ride a truck into captivity on December 23, 1941. More than a thousand civilians, caught on the atoll while building defense installations, were among those taken prisoner.

dangerous. Their decision was also affected by another incentive: a ninety-dollar-a-month bonus promised to those who stayed at least nine months.

Autumn 1941 brought unceasing rain and near-typhoons, with waves an estimated thirty feet high. In November the Wake Island garrison received a warning: "International situation dictates you should be on the alert." The atoll's defenses, consisting mainly of the airfield and six five-inch naval guns, were still far from complete.

Earlier that fall, Japan's military rulers had laid plans for increasing the size of their Pacific empire. Their plan called for destruction of the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and occupation of the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), Borneo, Thailand, Burma, Malaya, the Solomon Islands, the Gilbert Islands, Guam, and Wake Island.

Despite its small, 2,600-acre size, Wake was strategically important to both the United States and Japan. For the Americans, the atoll provided a key stopover for aircraft en route to the western Pacific and a base for conducting reconnaissance flights into the Japanese-held Marshall Islands, seven hundred miles to the south. The Japanese viewed the atoll as a springboard toward Midway and the Hawaiian Islands, and also recognized its importance as a link in their enemy's chain of communications—a link the Japanese wanted to break.



WAKE LIES to the west of the International Date Line, and it was Monday, December 8 there when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. A few minutes before 7:00 A.M. (Wake time) the island received a radio message that Hawaii was under attack. The Marine units on the atoll immediately went on the alert, but the warning apparently failed to cause enough concern to order complete mobilization. For many of the civilian crews, Monday morning passed much as usual.

Wilkerson was not working that day because one of his eyes had been injured by a sliver of coral. He and three friends spent the morning hours playing cards in their barracks. Shortly after noon they were dealing a last hand before going to lunch. Just as the men threw their chips into the middle of the table, the earth seemed to explode. Without any warning, a raid of thirty-six twin-engined Japanese bombers had arrived from the Marshall Islands.*

The barracks shook from exploding bombs, and dust seeped in around the doors and windows. After a second of stunned silence the four men dashed for the door and saw successive explosions and flames heading directly toward them. They ran from the building and threw themselves into the bushes, the only cover the island offered.

Wilkerson looked up and saw the bombers, with a bright red sun symbolizing Japan emblazoned on their sides, fly straight for the barracks the men had just deserted. The aircraft were flying so low that he could see the open bomb-bay doors, and he stared straight into the eyes of a laughing tail gunner. He could even see the

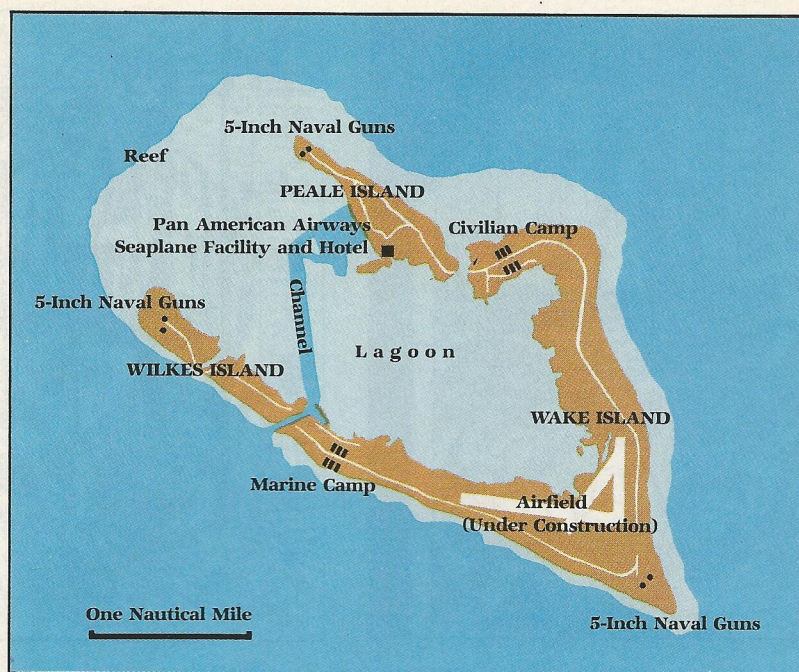
**Wake Island had no radar installation, and approaching aircraft were hard to hear because of the noise from the pounding surf. An observation post atop a water tank provided the only air raid warning system.*

Snapshots dating from late 1941 show newly constructed barracks on Wake. Most of these buildings were destroyed in air attacks during the first days of war.

crewman's glasses and white teeth. Meanwhile, as if in slow motion, the bombs fell on the barracks. The aircraft also strafed the area, kicking up dust and pieces of coral that rained down on the men cowering in the thin cover of bushes. The men watched a final wave of bombers fly over in formation, showering destruction from one end of the island to the other. Wilkerson could hear the screams of men who had been hit, and the firing of the defenders' .50-caliber machine guns. American three-inch anti-aircraft guns also opened up, but they were too late to be effective.

Five days earlier, Marines under Major Paul Putnam had arrived with a squadron of twelve F4F-3 Grumman Wildcat fighters. Four at a time, the planes had taken turns patrolling for enemy aircraft. On this day, cruising at an altitude of 12,000 feet, the American pilots failed to detect the Japanese bombers, flying at a lower altitude among heavy clouds. The attackers achieved complete surprise over Wake by cutting their engines during their approach, gliding in at an altitude of 1,000 or 1,500 feet. In a four-to-five-minute raid, the war had come to Wake Island as quickly and surprisingly as it had to Pearl Harbor.

The Pan American facilities on Peale Island were completely wiped out in the attack, although one "Clipper" in the lagoon escaped with a few bullet holes. Fuel drums and storage tanks went up in flames and billows of black smoke. Seven of the U.S. planes on the ground were destroyed, and the eighth was damaged. More than



fifty men, including Marines, Pan American employees, and civilian workers were killed.

Soon after the attack, Major James P.S. Devereux, the Marine commander on Wake, gathered the men together on the parade ground for a briefing. Many of the civilians asked to be inducted into the Marine Corps or Navy, but they were told there was no legal way this could be done. As frantic preparations continued for defending the island against future Japanese assaults, some of the civilian construction workers helped Marines dig revetments to protect the surviving planes. Others assisted by servicing the aircraft, digging fox-holes, filling sandbags for gun emplacements, and hauling ammunition from central storage areas to the guns.

Many more men were killed as air raids continued on December 9 and 10, destroying barracks, oil reserves, ammunition stockpiles, warehouses, and the hospital filled with wounded from the first attack.

BOTH CIVILIANS AND MARINES expected help to come quickly.* But on December 11, the Japanese again approached the island, this time with an invasion fleet of two transports, three cruisers, six destroyers, and two patrol boats. They shelled the island through the night and early morning. Daylight revealed that the Japanese were about to attempt an amphibious landing. The Marines manning the shore batteries waited until the enemy ships had closed to almost point-blank range before opening fire with their five-inch guns. They hit six of the

*A hastily organized relief force that included the aircraft carrier *Saratoga*, three cruisers, and nine destroyers sailed from Pearl Harbor on December 16. But plagued by indecision and logistical problems, the task force was still more than four hundred miles from Wake when the atoll was overrun by the Japanese on December 23.

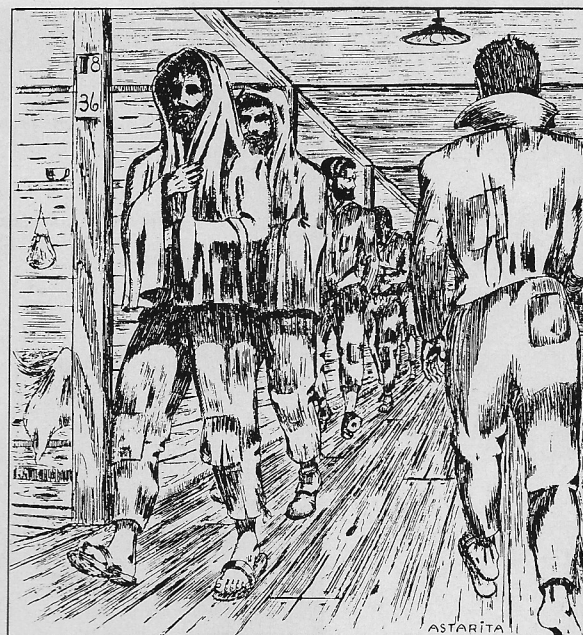
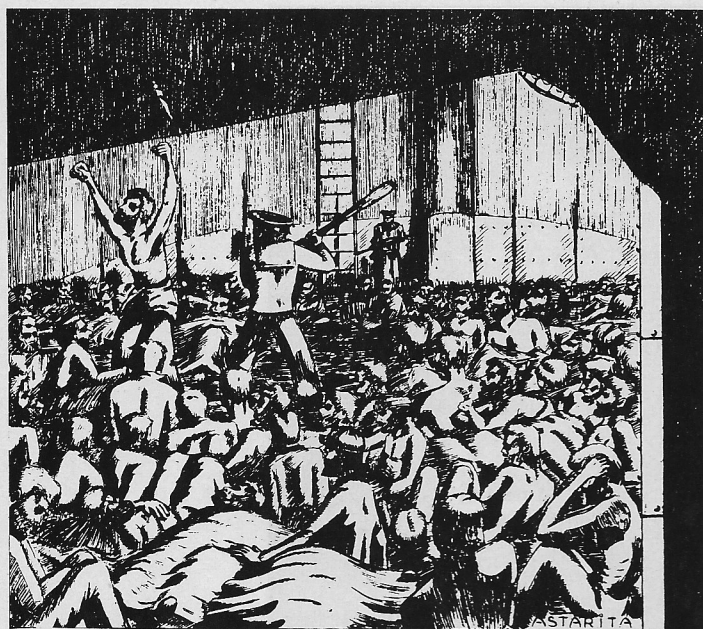
Located atop a submerged extinct volcano, Wake Atoll (above) includes Wake, Peale, and Wilkes Islands. In 1941 the U.S. outpost held strategic value for both America and Japan—for the United States as a link with the western Pacific; for Japan as a springboard to Midway and the Hawaiian Islands.

warships, including a destroyer that exploded, broke in two, and immediately sank. The Marines' remaining Wildcat fighters also attacked the invasion force, damaging several warships and sinking another destroyer. These heavy losses convinced the Japanese commander, Rear Admiral Sadamichi Kajioka, to withdraw. The Americans' wild cheers resounded across the island.

The joy was short-lived. Bombing continued every day but one after December 11. And then, at about 2 A.M. on December 23, a large Japanese invasion force of 2,000 special naval landing troops aboard transports, supported by six heavy cruisers and the aircraft carriers *Soryu* and *Hiryu*, arrived off the atoll.

There were too few Americans to defend all the beaches of the three islets as the Japanese Marines streamed ashore. By this time the Americans had no Grumman fighters left. The Marines, aided by those civilians who could find weapons, fought fiercely to hold off the overpowering Japanese offensive.* But by 7:30 A.M., Navy Commander Winfield Scott Cunningham (the senior officer on Wake) and Major Devereux faced the inevitable. Taking into consideration the otherwise unavoidable massacre of more than 1,000 civilians, the American commanders decided to surrender.

*At least twenty-five workers were killed in the final day of battle—several in close combat—increasing the toll of civilians on Wake to about seventy men.



WILKERSON SAW the Marines laying down their weapons, but it took him a few minutes to realize that they had actually surrendered. Marines and civilians, walking in a daze with their hands raised above their heads, were herded by their captors to the parade ground. Bewilderment soon gave way to fear: the men recalled hearing that the Japanese took no prisoners.

Their Japanese captors ordered the prisoners to strip down to their shorts. The Americans were told to throw their clothing to one side so that it could be searched for booby traps and booty. Forced to their knees on the hard dirt and sharp coral, with the shouts of enemy soldiers ringing in their ears, the near-naked prisoners saw the American flag lowered to the ground and the Japanese flag going up. It was an almost unendurable moment; Wilkerson felt as though the world as he knew it was falling apart.

The Japanese tossed back the prisoners' clothing in a haphazard fashion. After dressing in whatever they could find, the Americans were loaded onto trucks and driven to the airstrip. There they spent Christmas Eve and Christmas day shivering from cold and fear.

The day after Christmas the Americans were returned to what remained of their barracks, where they were kept under close guard.

After the first shock of battle and captivity, the construction workers began to hope they might be treated in the same manner as were other civilians, such as embassy personnel, in wartime. They thought they might even be eligible for exchange. But these hopes were soon dashed. The Japanese considered the civilians to be prisoners of war.

The Japanese began assigning their prisoners to work parties. Wilkerson drew the burial detail. Bodies lay scattered across the island and had to be disposed of quickly. A bulldozer dug a large, four-foot-deep trench, and the prisoners lowered the decomposing bodies into

Drawings by Joseph Astarita, a civilian captured on Wake, depict the ordeals of American prisoners during nearly four years of captivity: En route from Wake to a prison camp in China, POWs in the hold of the Nitta Maru watch a sailor beat one of their companions; and prisoners march up and down the aisles of their unheated barracks in an effort to keep warm. Astarita hid his drawings from Japanese guards by rolling them into a toothpaste tube.

it. Little effort was made to identify the remains before covering them with ponchos and burying them. The civilian dead wore no dog tags; those on the bodies of Marines had been yanked off by Japanese guards and thrown into a heap. Personal effects were left in the rotting clothing. Although the overpowering stench kept the guards from going through pockets, they were quick to remove a ring or wrist watch from a corpse.

The Japanese later sent a list of the survivors to American authorities, but several names, including Wilkerson's, were omitted. The families of these men either presumed they were dead or, in some instances, kept hoping and writing letters anyway.

SUSPENSE as to the prisoners' eventual fate ended on January 12, 1942, when 1,200 Americans, both military and civilian, were loaded onto the *Nitta Maru*, a converted Japanese passenger liner, for a grueling twelve-day trip to China.*

As the Americans boarded, some were forced to run a gauntlet of Japanese crew members, who struck and kicked them as they ran by. In the ship's companionway,

**About 100 American civilians were retained on Wake, where they were employed as forced labor. On the night of October 7, 1943, Japanese guards lined up the prisoners on the beach and killed them all with machine guns.*

the prisoners were searched from head to foot. They were allowed to keep nothing. Even eyeglasses were taken and thrown onto the deck. The Americans were then crowded together in the cargo hold. The hatches were kept closed except when Japanese crew members entered to assign tasks to the prisoners. Meals of gruel, rice, and rye were lowered to them in buckets.

For days the *Nitta Maru* sailed through an intense storm. As the seasick men lay against the bulkheads in an effort to sleep, the bow of the ship repeatedly rose, topped a wave, and then slammed down with a bone-shattering crash that echoed throughout the hull. The ship finally docked at Yokohama, Japan, where eight officers and a dozen enlisted men were sent ashore. Wilkerson and the others remained on board, however, to continue on to Shanghai.

When the *Nitta Maru* docked at Shanghai the prisoners were unloaded and herded through a primitive disinfectant spray area. Then they began a twelve-mile forced march to the Woosung Prison Camp, one of about three hundred POW camps maintained by the Japanese. The Woosung installation had not been used since 1937 when the Japanese had captured that part of China. The barbed wire fence surrounding the ghost-town-like compound was broken, and the Americans were temporarily confined to the narrow, one-story shanty-type barracks until it was repaired. They were given straw mats and thin blankets of woven cotton. Their daily food ration consisted of unpolished rice, soup with cabbage and other vegetables, and sometimes a bit of fish.

Work details were sent out each day to dig a canal for transferring supplies by boat from ships to warehouses on the shore. The men dug the canal with picks and shovels, and carried the dirt away in buckets. Most of the work had to be done during low tide. Between marching to the site, digging, and walking back, the men were on the move from morning to late night. Completion of the canal required about a year.

The back-breaking labor and a near-starvation diet took a heavy toll on the prisoners. They steadily lost weight, and the hard work made their muscles stand out from their emaciated bodies. Wilkerson recalls images of his companions' bodies bent forward under the strain of heavy labor, their rib cages protruding, abdomens caved in, and stringy muscles taut with effort.

Most of the prisoners at Woosung were later transferred to the Kiang Wang Prison Camp, four miles from Shanghai. It was not much different than Woosung. Wilkerson's group and others were forced to engage in hard labor again, this time building a rifle range known as the Mount Fuji project.

An officer named Ishihara was overseer of the work. Taller than his average countrymen, Ishihara was further distinguished by a protruding jaw and sunken eyes. These traits prompted some prisoners to nickname him the "Screaming Skull." Ishihara was universally hated, especially by those who felt the sting of his riding crop as he dealt smashing blows to heads and throats.

As the prisoners toiled on the Fuji project, their food rations were further reduced. Malnutrition, unsanitary conditions, and strenuous labor caused many men—including Wilkerson—to become ill. Some died.

AS THEIR IMPRISONMENT stretched into 1944 and early 1945, Wilkerson and his fellow-prisoners became increasingly aware that the Japanese were losing the war. American bombing raids hit enemy installations around Shanghai, and the planes flew so low over Kiang Wang that prisoners could see the pilots waving.

In May 1945 many Wake Island groups, including Wilkerson's, were again transferred. This time they were transported to the Fengtai Camp near Peking in boxcars so crowded there was only room enough to stand. Then, after a short stay there, they were taken to Fusan (now Pusan), Korea, then on to Hokkaido, Japan, where they were put to work in the local coal mines. By this time the months and years had run together into a continuous blur of hunger, fatigue, and degradation, which the men endured only through a supreme effort to survive.

During the spring of 1945 the prisoners began to see U.S. Army P-51 fighters zoom in low over the camp. In August, rumors spread that a giant killer bomb had been dropped on a Japanese city. Finally, in mid-September 1945, the camps were liberated by the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division. Forty-four months of brutal captivity were over.

IN MANY CASES the former construction workers headed home to families who did not know they were coming or who believed them to be long-dead. All returned to an America that was largely unaware they had been gone. Because they were not military men, the construction workers did not come home to parades and ticker tape. Unaccustomed at first to freedom, and frustrated with people who had no idea what they had been through, the men continued to suffer, though in different, more subtle ways.

To combat these frustrations, the civilian veterans of Wake and other Japanese-occupied Pacific islands formed an organization, "The Survivors of Wake, Guam, and Caviti." They met annually to talk about their experiences and to seek legislation that would recognize their role in the war.

Finally, in 1981, Congress enacted the bill that became a public law granting the men status as war veterans and providing them with honorable discharges and attendant benefits. Sadly, only a fraction of the original 1,500 civilian survivors of Wake, Guam, and Caviti lived to receive their commendations and medals. But although some four decades had passed, "The Veterans Without Portfolio," as they once were called, were finally proud veterans of the United States Navy. ★

Reba Wilkerson, wife of the Earl Wilkerson featured in this article, is a freelance writer and researcher living in Porterville, California.



Return to Wake

by Reba Wilkerson

NOVEMBER 2, 1985. A chartered DC-8 banked over a small spot in the Pacific known as Wake Atoll. Eighty civilians and forty retired Marines, all men who had fought a losing battle to save the U.S. outpost forty-four years earlier, craned their necks for a glimpse of the three-island group. It slid by far below, a tiny pale green and white smudge on a background of cobalt blue.

During the two weeks between the attack on Pearl Harbor and Christmas 1941, the battle for Wake had raised American morale and delayed the advance of Japanese forces in the Pacific. The Marines and civilian construction workers defending the atoll had fought hard despite heavy losses and little hope of rescue. Although finally overwhelmed, the combined group was the only force to successfully repel an amphibious landing in World War II.

The return visit to Wake comprised the first joint reunion of the civilians and Marines since leaving the atoll as Japanese prisoners in

1942. Joining them on the return trip were twenty young Marines from VMA-211, the modern-day counterpart to the fighter squadron wiped out during the siege of Wake in 1941. (Today's members are known as the "Wake Island Avengers.")

The gathering had formed in Honolulu. There, at a dinner the Marines gave for their non-military counterparts, the civilian "Survivors of Wake, Guam, and Caviti" were especially gratified to hear the Marines give them credit for fighting alongside them. For thirty-six years the former civilian POWs had been "Veterans Without Portfolio" before finally receiving, in 1981, official government recognition for their service.

During their stay on Oahu, some of the survivors visited the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, the final resting place of thousands of Americans killed during the Korean and Second World Wars. Of particular interest to the veterans was a plaque listing the names of

men who gave their lives on Wake, including about one hundred prisoners the Japanese retained there as a labor force and executed in October 1943.

DURING THE five-hour flight to Wake, the survivors—and in some cases, family members of now-deceased veterans—recounted the defenders' experiences during the days and weeks after the Japanese first attacked the atoll in 1941.

Sally Alexander, daughter of Joe F. McDonald, a civilian construction worker who died in 1984, made the trip with her mother and husband. The three said they were making the trip "for Joe," who for years had longed to go back. Sally told her father's story:

"There were two Joe McDonalds on the island when the war started. My father was Joe F. McDonald; the other man was Joe L. McDonald. Several days after the initial attack the two men were standing together on the beach when the Japanese planes started another strafing run.

My father ran for the hospital and the other Joe dived for a trench on the beach. By a quirk of fate the planes came straight down the beach, and Joe L. was killed. There was a mixup in names, and my grandparents later received word that their son had been killed on December 19, 1941.

"Dad had worked on Wake as both a surveyor and a stringer for United Press. The last U.P. dispatch he managed to get off was datelined December 23. It was only after a memorial funeral had been held that his parents came across the newspaper article dated the twenty-third, and dared hope that he was still alive—as indeed he was. He lived through forty-four months of prison camps and returned home to live a happy and full life.

"After heart surgery in 1982 he lapsed into a coma, from which he never recovered. When my family received word from the hospital of his death it was December 24, 1984. The first, erroneous report of his death had been dated December 24, 1941. We feel as though he had two chances at life."

Leroy Myers, another civilian survivor, had been on Wake with his father when the Japanese captured the atoll. They were one of three father-and-son combinations taken captive but the only pair to survive. Myers told of scrounging for food in the prison camp for his father, who was frail after a year in captivity. At one point his father became too sick to work. The Japanese, a very family-oriented people, allowed Leroy to do both his own job and his father's. As food became more scarce, Leroy gave much of his own portion to his father. To this day it still bothers him that sometimes he wanted to keep the food for himself. "It took all my will power to hand over the food when I was so desperately hungry," he remembered.

WAKE SURVIVOR Melvin Davidson, his wife Margy, and their son Kenneth made the trip to the atoll together. Davidson is a soft-spoken man. He seemed reluctant to dwell on his experiences. "I was taken prisoner on December 23, 1941," he said quietly. "I suffered starvation and beatings along with

the others for almost four years. They broke my nose with a club." He touched his nose to show the bump. "However, nothing that happened to me then compares to what happened to Kenneth in Vietnam," he said, looking across at his son, who had received a severe head wound while fighting in Southeast Asia. "I had told Kenneth so much about my experiences as he was growing up that he had always wanted to go back to the island with me. Here we are."

Mel's wife Margy accompanied her husband for two reasons—to honor him as well as her deceased brother, who had also been on Wake.

"I feel as though my brother's story was never told by anyone," she said. "His name was Thomas W. Sanford. He grew up in Grants Pass, Oregon, and early in 1941 was turned down for military duty because of lung problems. In July 1941 he signed on for the civilian job on Wake. He was on the island a scant four months when the initial bombing by the Japanese occurred. Sixteen days later, as he was helping man the gun at Peacock Point, he was taken prisoner along with the others. He was first taken to Woosung, China, then to Kiangwan. He spent nineteen months in those two camps, then was transported to Osaka, where his troubles really began.

"In Osaka he was running a drill press. His tattered sleeve caught in the machinery, and his right arm was shattered. . . . He must have been in terrible agony as the doctors wired the shattered bones back together without administering anesthetic or pain killers. They had no antibiotics either, and his injured arm developed gangrene. The doctors would not amputate, so they waited for him to die.

"A Japanese nurse felt pity for him, and while tending him the best she could, tried putting alum in the wound. That, or God's mercy, worked, and the arm began to heal. It was a long process. The little nurse who took care of him through the whole ordeal taught him to speak Japanese. That was how they passed many a pain-filled night.

"He was an apt pupil. By the time

he was released from the hospital he was proficient enough to be an interpreter in the camp. That, he later believed, was what saved his life. He could no longer do the hard labor required by his captors, but he could be their interpreter. We all felt an eternal gratitude to the Japanese nurse.

"He finally came home in October 1945 and had more surgery done on his arm at the Marine hospital near San Francisco. He was also bloated from beri-beri and had recurring bouts of malaria.

"Tommie died in August 1972 of a coronary attack. . . . I still miss him terribly," said Margy Davidson.

Earl Wilkerson recalled the first death he witnessed in the camps. "It was one of those senseless things that sometimes happen at the worst time. . . . A young American prisoner and a young Japanese guard were playing around. The prisoner would pretend to dash for the fence and the guard would pretend to raise his gun and fire. We had watched the pantomime play for fifteen minutes or so when the guard's gun accidentally went off. I'll never forget the astounded look on the guard's face at the sound of the shot, and the sight of the young prisoner's body hanging limply on the barbed wire fence. None of us thought it was anything but an accident caused by two very young men who were both bored with their roles. However, the guard was transferred to another post."

TODAY WAKE is used by the U.S. Air Force as a refueling base and as a stopover for aircraft requiring repairs. Wake's former defenders were returning as guests of the Air Force and were greeted by commanding officer Major James Westmoreland and vice commander Captain David Hubah.

As they toured the atoll, the veterans found it changed almost beyond recognition by time, weather, and the Japanese, who had built extensive fortifications during their occupation. Nonetheless, as the survivors rode or walked from place to place, scenes triggered memories.

The seaplane ramp on Peale Island, where Pan American "Clippers" had once discharged passen-

gers during their overnight stopovers, was now merely a broken concrete foundation in the underbrush.

"Right here is where I saw my first live hero," Wilkerson said, waving his arms to take in the area. "This fellow who worked for Pan American Airways was helping load the Clipper and get it out of there before it got blown up. He was also helping load the wounded onto his truck to take them back to the hospital. The Clipper captain told him they were leaving in five minutes, with or without him. He gave up his chance to fly back to safety and stayed to help. That took a lot of guts."

The survivors took special interest in "Prisoners' Rock," an enormous boulder with names, dates, and symbols chipped into its surface—a legacy left behind by the men who had remained on the atoll as prisoners and were killed by their Japanese guards in 1943.

Civilian veteran Rodney Kephart was the last American to leave Wake Island alive during the war. He ran

his hand over the scarred rock and told the group his story:

"By September 1942," he said, "the Japanese had decided to scale down the POW crew on Wake to ninety-eight men. I was among those listed to remain. The chief medical officer decided he didn't want to be the lone medical man on the island, so he asked a Navy corpsman by the name of Milton Dryer to be taken back off the boat. I was called to fill his place among the evacuees. We know what happened to the men who stayed."

DURING THEIR SECOND DAY ON Wake, the former civilian defenders built a small monument in memory of fellow workers who had died there and later in prison camps. A memorial honoring Marines already stood on the atoll, as did a smaller one dedicated to the Japanese soldiers who had perished there. It seemed imperative to the former construction workers that their fallen civilian comrades be remembered as well.

After attending a ceremony hon-

oring the Marine defenders, the civilians selected a spot behind the base chapel and poured a simple concrete slab for the new memorial. They embedded snow-white coral in the cement as a centerpiece, laid a border of shells around the edges, and added an inscription, "Civilian Workers of Wake, 12-23-41."

This simple monument was intended as a temporary memorial until a permanent one could be built. The survivors agreed to make organizing such a project their first order of business after returning home.

Two years after their visit to Wake, this dream was realized. With the help of financial contributions from members of the survivors' group and from Velma Morrison and the Morrison Knudsen Company (the Boise, Idaho, construction company for which the civilians had worked), a permanent monument was completed and dedicated on Wake on April 21, 1987. ★

Reba Wilkerson accompanied her husband during the survivors' November 1985 return to Wake.

"The Most-Hated Man in America" *Continued from page 15*

What angered Americans was the apparent venom with which he attacked their national character and their pride in creating a new country out of wilderness in only a few generations. Yes, they were boastful—but this was not vanity but pride of accomplishment. Yes, they were aggressive and blustering—but how else could a wilderness be tamed? Yes, they were short on manners but America was still young. Refinement took time. Yes, they seemed distrustful of their leaders—but this kept them from being led by tyrants. The checks and balances system built into American government was their unique safeguard to liberty.

Dickens did not seem to appreciate the historical background that had spawned the country. For him, American customs and manners were so completely different from English customs and manners that he simply could not reconcile the two.

American Notes gained Dickens a final profit of £1,000. But he was unprepared for the overwhelmingly bitter reaction the book received, making him still more intransigent; he repeated his criticisms in his next novel, *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*, which he began writing in 1843. New Yorkers were so infuriated by this second insult that copies of the book were flung into the witches' cauldron in productions of *Macbeth* in New York theaters.

WITHIN A FEW YEARS, however, Dickens had melted in his judgments about America. In a subsequent edition of *American Notes* he assured his readers that "prejudiced I am not and never have been otherwise than in favor of the United States . . . to represent me as viewing America with ill-nature, coldness, or animosity, is merely to do a very foolish thing which is always a very easy one." Dickens then tried to soften any lingering animosity: "I have many friends in America and feel a grateful interest in the country."

His apology, the passing of a generation, and preoccupation with the momentous events of the Civil War era dampened whatever ill feeling any American still harbored against Dickens. When he returned to America twenty-five years after his first visit, he declared to his once-again-adoring public that his first impressions had not been correct, and he apologized for any offense he might have given. The retraction palliated any wounded pride that still needed soothing, and Charles Dickens once again captured his place in the hearts of Americans. ★

Ernest L. Abel, a previous contributor to American History Illustrated, is a professor at Wayne State University in Detroit.

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